

Translations of the Sublime

Intersections

Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture

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Translations of the Sublime

The Early Modern Reception and Dissemination
of Longinus' *Peri Hupsous* in Rhetoric, the Visual Arts,
Architecture and the Theatre

Edited by

Caroline van Eck, Stijn Bussels,
Maarten Delbeke and Jürgen Pieters



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Orazio (Lucca, 2009); “Leggere vedendo, vedere leggendo. Osservazioni su testo iconico e verbale nella struttura della *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*”, *Italianistica* 38.2 (2009) 141–164; “Un frammento autografo dell’*Ulisse* di Giovan Battista della Porta”, *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 184.1 (2007) 43–70; and “Prologhi figurati. Appunti sull’uso della prosopopea nel prologo teatrale del Cinquecento”, *Italianistica* 35.3 (2006) 61–86.

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INTRODUCTION

Caroline van Eck, Stijn Bussels, Maarten Delbeke

The sublime combines conflicting emotions: fear and awe, horror and fascination. It sweeps the public off its feet in an overwhelming experience of beauty mixed with terror and admiration, caused by stupendous works of art, terrifying natural events such as earthquakes, or actions that are so shocking they can hardly be put into words. Originally a rhetorical concept, its main classical source is (ps.-)Longinus' treatise *Peri hupsous* or *On the Sublime*, probably written in the 1st century AD. Contrary to widely held assumptions, its early modern revival did not begin with the adaptation published by Boileau in 1674; it was not connected solely with the early Greek editions that began to appear from 1554; nor was its impact limited to rhetoric and literature.¹ Manuscript copies began to circulate in Quattrocento Italy and from there spread to France and Britain, but very few have been studied.² Neither have the ways the sublime was used, in rhetoric and

¹ For a recent and authoritative statement of that view see Üding G. – Kalivoda G. – Robling H.-F. (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* (Tübingen: 1992), s.v. 'Das Erhabene': 'Die moderne Geschichte der Kategorie des Erhabenen beginnt 1674 [...]. On the history of the sublime see Saint-Girons B., *Fiat Lux: Une Philosophie du Sublime* (Paris: 1993) and *Le Sublime de l'Antiquité à nos jours* (Paris: 2005); Matelli E. (ed.), *Il sublime. Fortuna di un testo e di un'idea* (Milan: 2007), and Pries C. (ed.), *Das Erhabene. Zwischen Grenzerfahrung und Größenwahn* (Weinheim: 1989), which even though it concentrates mainly on the period after Burke and Kant, is an important document for the revival of interest in the sublime inspired by Postmodern thinkers such as Lyotard.

² The contributions by Goyet, Refini, Gründler and Till give more detailed overviews of the historiography of Longinus; here we only list the major studies: Weinberg B., "Translations and commentaries of Longinus' *On the Sublime* to 1600: a Bibliography", *Modern Philology* 47, 3 (1950) 145–51; idem, 'ps. Longinus, Dionysius Cassius', in Kristeller P.O. – Kranz F.E. (eds.), *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum: Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries* (Washington D.C.: 1971) 193–8; Costa G., "The Latin Translations of Longinus's *Peri hupsous* in Renaissance Italy", in *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Bononiensis. Proceedings of the Fourth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies* (Binghampton: 1985) 225–38; Brody J., *Boileau and Longinus* (Geneva: 1958) 9–13; Fumaroli M., "Rhétorique d'école et rhétorique adulte", *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 86 (1986) 35–36 and 39–40, and idem, *L'Ecole du silence. Le sentiment des images au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: 1988) 126–9.

Allacci Leone, *De erroribus magnorum virorum in dicendo* (Rome, Mascardi: 1635); manuscript versions of his Longinus translation survive in the Biblioteca Vallicelliana in Rome. On Allacci see Fumaroli M., "Crépuscule de l'enthousiasme au XVII^e siècle", in *III^e*

literature, but also in the arts, architecture and the theatre been studied in any systematic way. The present volume is a first attempt to chart the early modern translations of *Peri hupsous*, both in the literal sense of the history of its dissemination by means of editions, versions and translations in Latin and vernacular languages, but also in the figurative sense of its uses and transformations in the visual arts in the period from the first early modern editions of Longinus until its popularization by Boileau.

At first sight, to write such a history of what we might call the prehistory of the sublime may seem a straightforward task, merely a matter of identifying editions and documenting uses of *Peri hupsous* or the concept of the sublime. But by its very nature, Longinus' text and its subject elude the easy, clear-cut classification that would indeed make writing its early history relatively easy. In *Peri Hupsous* Longinus described the experience of the sublime as one which sweeps readers or viewers along, robs them of rational control over their feelings, and opens hitherto unknown vistas of the infinite, the horrendous, or the incomprehensible. Longinus' description continues to raise many questions, not the least what kind of experience this is: amazement or wonder, artistic enjoyment, religious or mystical rapture; and how exactly did this complex notion function in the period before its codification, with which meanings was it endowed, and what is its relationship to the 'neighbouring' experiences that we just mentioned? After the codification of the sublime by Burke and Kant the term came to stand for an aesthetic concept, defining a particular kind of experience of art, nature and the self; but before 1750, it escaped easy

Congrès International d'Etudes Néolatines (Tours 1976) (Paris: 1980) vol. XI, 1279–1305; idem, "Rhétorique d'école et rhétorique adulte"; Nau C. (ed.), *Le temps du sublime. Longin et le paysage Poussinien* (Rennes: 2005) 32 ff. For the French manuscript translation see Weinberg B., "Une traduction française du 'Sublime' de Longin vers 1645", *Modern Philology* 59, 3 (1962) 159–203, and most recently Gilby E., *Pseudo-Longin. De la sublimité du discours. Traduction inédite du XVII^e siècle introduite, éditée & annotée* (Paris: 2007), who has questioned the degree of certainty with which Weinberg attributed this version to Mazarin or his entourage, but without proposing an alternative. The drawings of ground plans in the manuscript do suggest some proximity to Mazarin.

For France see Litman T., *Le sublime en France (1660–1714)* (Paris: 1971); Hache S., *La langue du ciel. Le sublime en France au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: 2000), which includes a selection of sublime writing before Boileau; Nau (ed.), *Le temps du sublime* and Gilby E., *Sublime Worlds. Early Modern French Literature* (London: 2006). For Germany see Zelle C., "Angenehmes Grauen". *Literaturhistorische Beiträge zur Ästhetik des Schrecklichen im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* [= Phil. Diss., Marburg 1985]. Hamburg: Meiner 1987 (= Studien zum achtzehnten Jahrhundert, Bd. 10), and *Ästhetik des Erhabenen: Von Longin bis Lyotard* (Hagen: 1999). For the Dutch Republic there exist no comparable studies, although the Dutch edition by W. Krul of Burke's *Enquiry* and C. Madelein's *Bilderdijk, Kinker en Van Hemert: als van hooger aart en bestemming* (Groningen: 2008) pay attention to the early history of the sublime.

disciplinary classification. The discipline that wrote the history of the sublime after 1750 is that of aesthetics; but that discipline itself evolved only in the course of the 18th century. As a result, aesthetics imposed a conceptual grid on the sublime as described by Longinus and his early modern translators, editors or adaptors that makes it very difficult to reconstruct its pre-modern genealogy. To study the history of the sublime before 1750, therefore, raises two problems: on the one hand, its meaning cannot be located in a monodisciplinary way (e.g. as an aesthetic concept, on a par with the beautiful or the ugly); on the other hand, in early modern Europe experiences that after 1750 would be characterized as 'sublime' *did* occur, but were labelled differently: as experiences of wonder and amazement, as mystical experiences of rapture, as horror or fear. As a consequence, any investigation into the pre-history of the sublime has to be multi-disciplinary, drawing on rhetoric, art and architectural history, the history of philosophy and religion, literary and theatre studies, and anthropology.

The research programme from which this volume of essays results started at the origins of such a prehistory. Its aim was to investigate early editions of Longinus, not in order to establish a stemma of editions or a *fortuna critica* of his treatise, but as a process of translation: from one language into others, and from one intellectual and artistic domain to another. Therefore this volume is divided into two parts: in the first, the early modern reception and dissemination of *Peri hupsous* is charted in the essays by Goyet, Refini and Till, who each look at a key feature of the sublime and its early modern transformations in and through editions and adaptations.

Alfred Rosenberg and Bernard Weinberg are the pioneers in this field.³ Weinberg's work on the history of the sublime is well known, and has been much used by subsequent scholars, but he was preceded in reconstructing the early history of the sublime by Rosenberg's in which he showed that a series of editions and translations, both into Latin and English, were produced in England before the publication of Boileau's *Du sublime ou le merveilleux* in 1674; he also showed that some of the English editions that were published after 1674 were hybrids, incorporating elements from Boileau into versions of Longinus, and leaning heavily on the Frenchman's translation of the Greek. Here we find a first illustration of an important characteristic of the history of the early modern development of the sublime: Boileau's book did not supersede Longinus' treatise, nor did it cut short the ongoing *Nachleben*, but the latter remained relevant. As we shall see, even after Burke's *Inquiry* saw the light, despite its wide success and

³ Rosenberg A., *Longinus in England bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: 1917).

transformation of the sublime from a rhetorical into an aesthetic concept, other and older versions of the sublime continued to be used and developed.

Bernard Weinberg discovered a series of versions of *Peri hupsous* produced in 16th-century Italy; his work was continued in the 1960s and 70s for Italy by Gustavo Costa, for France by Jean Brody and Théodore Litman, and for Germany by Karsten Zelle. In these early stages of the study of Longinus' early modern reception, the focus was very much on the text and its impact in rhetorical and literary circles. The work of Marc Fumarioli, Clélia Nau and Sophie Hache on the use of the sublime as an instrument of visual persuasion, and that of Sophie Ploeg, David Norbrook and Lydia Hamlett on its use in the arts and architecture of Great Britain, have made clear that the use of the sublime as a category of visual persuasion is a major part of that reception. But they have all shown as well, that this role of the sublime is not simply one of a rhetorical concept being adopted in a different sphere. In these transformations and translations new versions of the sublime were developed. To give two examples: the architectural sublime, in the London city churches of Hawksmoor or in reactions to the ancient Doric temples of Paestum allows for an expression of space that had not been possible in traditional, Vitruvian architectural thought. Defenders of the royal images made of Louis XIV by Bernini or Martin Desjardins against charges of idolatry and presumption argue that the King himself is the supreme embodiment of the sublime; in these works of art and the reactions they excite, we can observe a change from allegorical representation to direct, almost unmediated embodiment which uses the rhetoric and poetics of the sublime as its instrument.

The essays by Francis Goyet and Eugenio Refini that open this volume, show the foundations of this process of dissemination, translation and transformation. The first author closely traces the meaning of a key aspect of the sublime, the figure of *apostrophè*. The figure of *apostrophè*, turning away or introducing a new subject, to give it its simplest meaning, is in a wider sense characteristic of the impact of the sublime, because it moves the audience out of its normal state into one of elevated wonder or amazement. Francis Goyet illuminates through his analysis of this *pars pro toto* the complex process of early modern transformations of the sublime.

Apostrophè is also one of the figures of speech that lends itself most easily to a transference into the visual arts. The examples of the figure standing on the edge of a painting and looking out of the pictorial space at the spectator are numerous in the work of Rubens or Venetian Renaissance painters. They epitomize the rhetorical conception of painting in early modern Europe, alert us to the adaptation of figures of speech to

the visual arts, but also make us aware that such use is never a matter of simple borrowing. Bellini or Rubens' saints beckon us indeed into the pictorial world on whose threshold they stand; but they also make the viewer aware that their persuasive force works with pictorial not verbal means, such as the manipulation of linear perspective or the architectural framework of the painting. *Apostrophè*, we might thus say, is both an epitome of the sublime, as Goyet shows, but also of the translations of the sublime into other domains of human culture.

The essay by Eugenio Refini analyses the development of another key aspect of the sublime, that of imagination in the sense of the mental representation of sensations, ideas or images derived from the senses or *phantasia*, by means of a new survey of the early editions, both published and in manuscript, of Longinus in 15th- and 16th-century Italy.⁴ More in particular, he shows the development of that notion in the version attributed to the Roman humanist Fulvio Orsini. It has several times been suggested that Michelangelo was acquainted with this text. Refini returns to this assumption, not to offer a new argument for or against it, but to articulate the issues involved in such a hypothesis.

Dietmar Till concentrates on how the *Peri Hupsous*, next to other treatises of Hellenistic literary criticism, such as (ps.-)Demetrius' *Peri hermeneias* and Hermogenes' *Peri ideon*, were used to legitimate the style used in the Bible. He clarifies how from the 16th century on Longinus obtained a central position in discussions about Biblical style because of his *fiat lux*-quotation. Certainly protestant theologians used it to show that the Bible could be seen as superior to the norms of Ciceronianism, as its style was sublime and simple in Longinus's terms. Not only Biblical philology and hermeneutics heavily relied on Hellenistic rhetorical categories as the sublime; protestant 'dogmatics' also stated that the Bible is simple and sublime at the same time, thus acclaiming its status of 'sola scripture' for theology.

Transformation, often accompanied by a revision of the tradition, is a conspicuous feature of early modern developments of the sublime. The contribution by Paul Smith on Jean de la Bruyère's comparison between Corneille and Racine in the fourth edition of his *Caractères* (1689) illustrates this particularly well. At first sight the comparison is simply another instalment in the well-established genre of the parallel between authors, statesmen, temperaments and so on of which Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* is

⁴ Cf. Lemma 'phantasia' in Liddell H.G. – Scott S., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: 1968) 1915.

the best-known classical case. But La Bruyère's comparison, in which Corneille is praised as sublime, original, inimitable but unequal, and Racine as just, regular and touching, is in fact an extremely subtle and ambiguous exercise in defining the sublime: what it is, what kind of figure of speech, and where it enters into a tragedy. La Bruyère accomplishes this not by reacting explicitly to two recent statements on the sublime, Boileau's *Traité du sublime* and Dominique Bouhours' *Manière de bien penser* (1687), but by showing implicitly how one can write in a sublime way about the sublime. At the same time, by alluding to the observations by Longinus on Greek tragedians and poets, and changing the genre of the parallel from a comparison with a clear winner into a literally ambivalent assessment, he transforms an important aspect of the tradition of literary criticism of which the sublime was part.

Part Two brings together a series of translations of the sublime into the visual arts, architecture and the theatre. Based on our present knowledge, this process may be said to have started in Vasari's descriptions of Raphael's Fire in the Borgo fresco in the Vatican, Palma Vecchio's Tempest and Giulio Romano's Sala dei Giganti in Mantua. As Hanna Gründler shows in her essay, Vasari's account of the terrible scene shows the combination of fear and admiration, fear of the fire itself and admiration for these painters' artistic powers to represent the force of the elements, nature's disasters or humans' fear of death, so vividly that the viewer believes he or she is looking at the event itself, not a fresco. Evocative powers, both in Raphael's fresco and in Vasari's ekphrasis are heightened by a use of sublime ambiguity, drawing on the terrible, the awesome, the beautiful and the superhuman qualities of art. The *terribilità* Vasari here evokes, usually connected with the work of Michelangelo, shows clear similarities to the *deinotès* associated with the sublime in Longinus. We do not have any direct, primary evidence that Vasari had actually read Longinus; in fact it is highly unlikely that he was able to read Greek. But Gründler makes a very plausible case that the Florentine intellectuals who advised him, and cooperated on the Introductions to the *Vite*, were well aware of the discussions on rhetoric and poetics, including the sublime, that were held in the 1550s and 1560s, sparked off by Bembo's *Prose* and Robortello's *editio princeps* of Longinus.

With the essays by Maarten Delbeke on Bernini, Stijn Bussels and Bram Van Oostveldt on the sublime and marvellous in 17th-century French performing arts, and Helen Langdon on Salvator Rosa we move to 17th-century translations of the sublime in the visual arts and the theatre. In the course of the 17th century, the sublime becomes an increasingly

common notion in art literature. Far from eroding its relevance, this dissemination of the sublime engenders new interactions between different discourses, a development that runs parallel with the increasing attention for the sublime from theorists across a range of disciplines, including art and literature but also ethics and politics. Exactly this development, Delbeke argues, allows Bernini's biographers to identify his artistic genius not just with important artists like Michelangelo but also with extra-artistic models of greatness, such as heroes, kings and rulers. In Bernini's case, the sublime model of choice is Louis XIV, and the works of art that bear witness of their historical relation are read as marker's of Bernini's grasp of, and entitlement to, true greatness. The fact that these works also belong to an important episode in Franco-Italian artistic exchange only raises the stakes in defining Bernini's sublimeness. After all, the sublime emerges as a crucial critical category in the context of literary controversies that pit French literary critics against their Italian counterparts. As the notion that binds these different discussions together, the sublime brings out the intricate connections between views on art, style and identity.

Bram Van Oostveldt en Stijn Bussels discuss ideas on the impact of stage machinery in French 17th- en 18th-century treatises on the performing arts. Many critics emphasise the intensive responses which the machinery could elicit urging the ideal onlooker to get totally immersed in the supernatural marvel and horror displayed. However, paradoxically, that onlooker also needed to evaluate the machinery as a technical *tour de force*. In his *Pratique du théâtre* (1657), the Abbé d'Aubignac was the first to name this powerful combination of marvel, horror and aesthetic pleasure with the term *le merveilleux*. Only two decennia later Nicolas Boileau used the same term as a synonym for the sublime. Inspired by Boileau the term also received a new definition in the discourse on the performing arts, most clearly in the defence of the *tragédie lyrique*, as it came to be used to indicate astonishment and great emotional transport without putting the emphasis on the rational distance.

Both Rosa's work and his character were often seen as typically sublime by later commentators such as Horace Walpole, who described a journey across the Alps in 1739 as 'Precipices, mountains, torrents, wolves, rumblings – Salvator Rosa'. In such statements we see an announcement of the 18th-century development in which the sublime would become an aesthetic concept, similar to the picturesque in playing a double role: that of a guide to both the design and the appreciation of art and/or nature in artistic terms. But the development of the sublime in the circles which contributed to Rosa's intellectual formation, that of the Accademia degli

Umoristi and the Barberini court, was much wider and more heterogeneous. For poets, especially those influenced by Marino, the sublime had become associated with the stupendous and the marvellous, with *meraviglia*; for the *letterati* associated with the Barberini circles such as Leone Allacci, the sublime was used to transcend in mystical experiences the boundaries of the natural world; and for natural scientists the sublime was used to speak about the aesthetic of the infinite. For them, as for Rosa, nature was a theatre of marvels, that fills the mind with *stupore* and *ebrezza*. Langdon teases out these various strands in Rosa's landscapes, scenes of witchcraft and portraits of criminals. The foundation for his sublime art is genius, and the two come together in his last works, *Empedocles leaping into Etna* and *Pan and Pindar*, which announce the 18th-century glorification of genius, but also draw on fascination for the vast, the infinite and terrifying aspects of nature that is so characteristic for 17th-century Italian interest in the sublime, which transformed Longinian topoi such as the eruptions of the Etna, but also incorporated other classical versions of the sublime, such as Ovid's description of the four ages of man or Lucretius' passages on earthquakes, storms at sea or the infinity of the universe.

Lucretius was also an important source for English versions of the sublime. Britain was in fact the country where the largest and most varied group of editions, translations and adaptations were produced in the 17th century, well before Boileau's came out in 1674. In our present state of knowledge the first vernacular edition of Longinus was published in London in 1652: John Hall's *Peri hupsous, Or, Dionysius Longinus on the Height of Eloquence*. Before that, Longinus was also quoted by George Chapman, the translator of Homer, in his *On Translating and Defending Homer* of 1611, and included in the ideal curriculum devised by Milton for the Christian poet in 1641–44. But as David Norbrook has recently shown, the English were also interested in Lucretius' version of the sublime: many translations of *De rerum natura* were produced as well, although the majority circulated only in manuscript form.⁵ Many of these versions were produced in highly politicized contexts. Hall for instance was a pamphlet writer for Cromwell, and the poet Andrew Marvell drew on the sublime to write about the execution of King Charles I.

Uses of the sublime in the arts also occurred in very public places: as Lydia Hamlett and Caroline van Eck argue in their essays, both the development of an Anglican church architecture and of history painting drew

⁵ Norbrook D., *Writing the English Republic* (Cambridge – New York: 1999); Porter J., "Lucretius and the Sublime", in Gillespie S. – Hardie P. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius* (Cambridge: 2007) 167–85.

very much on a sublime poetics. In its secular variety, in the ceilings at Greenwich for instance glorifying the deeds of King William III, it was an attempt to emulate the court art of Louis XIV at Versailles with its use of the sublime to represent the King's greatness. The religious architecture of Hawksmoor, Wren and Vanbrugh, and the paintings for the interior of Saint Paul's dome reflect a Longinian way of thinking about architectural and pictorial composition in terms of difficulty or conflict, the union of opposing elements, and an awareness of the impact of vast spaces on the spectator. They also illustrate the complexity of the routes early modern translations of the sublime took. Behind many sublime ideas in the English arts and architecture we find Longinus, for instance in William Sanderson's *Graphice* of 1658, one of the earliest English treatises on painting; the version Boileau made, and subsequently introduced into artistic discourse by Roger de Piles was adapted for English readers and English art by Jonathan Richardson in his *Essay on the Theory of Painting* (1715). There are political versions of the sublime inspired by Lucretius and Seneca, for instance in political tracts dealing with the Commonwealth or the execution of Charles I. But we also find echoes of Leone Allacci's version of the sublime, originally produced at the Barberini court to take part in Roman discussions about primitive eloquence and pre-Babylonian architecture, and transmitted by means of his book on church architecture into Anglican circles that shared his interest in the origins of Christianity.

The final essay in this book, Sigrid de Jong's analysis of the use of the sublime in reactions to the early Greek Doric temples in Paestum near Naples from 1750 onwards, adds yet another facet to the complexity and ambivalence of the development of the sublime before its codification as an aesthetic concept by Burke and Kant. Viewers were baffled by the primitive, uncouth, rough and forbidding aspect of the temples, which did not conform at all to their expectations formed by the treatises of Vitruvius or Palladio and images of Greek and Roman architecture. At the same time, visitors were fascinated by the ruins and their age, the scenery and handling of space. To give words to their paradoxical experiences they often appealed to the sublime, both to the Longinian poetics of a union of opposing elements, and the effects of awe and terror, admiration and disappointment bordering on terror. But they also did so in the aesthetic sense of Burke and Kant, that is as a way of putting into words the conflicting experience of visiting these ruins. At the same time, invoking the sublime also helped visitors to put into words aspects of ancient architecture – the handling and experience of space above all – that had not been articulated in Vitruvian theory; and it helped them to appreciate those aspects of Paestum – its primitivism, its roughness and lack of ornament

and harmony – that made it almost the opposite of classical ideals of beauty. Its appreciation was thus very much based on the sublime, a concept derived from classical rhetoric; but ultimately that contributed to the erosion of classical ideals of architectural beauty.

This volume therefore traces a few aspects of the dissemination, translations and transformations of the Longinian sublime in Early Modern Europe. It shows how after a first stage of philological reconstruction and edition, translations and adaptations began to appear in the later 16th and early 17th century, soon to be followed by migrations of the sublime into other spheres of human culture, chief among them the visual arts, the theatre and architecture. Thereby we have made a first start in showing the importance of the sublime not just in rhetoric or literature, but in the arts as well.

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I. THE EARLY MODERN RECEPTION AND DISSEMINATION
OF *PERI HUPSOUS*

THE MEANING OF *APOSTROPHÈ* IN LONGINUS'S
ON THE SUBLIME (16, 2)

Francis Goyet

On the sublime seems to grant apostrophe a special, even emblematic status, since it appears first among the figures enumerated in chapter 16, which refers to the example of Demosthenes conjuring up the dead. But the meaning of *apostrophè* in this particular context (16, 2) is very far from being clear: as Donald A. Russell notes laconically, we are not dealing here with 'the usual sense of this term'.¹ My purpose is to examine the unusual meaning of *apostrophè* in this context. I will contend that the Greek word *apostrophè* here does not describe a particular figure, but comments on what a figure is, generally speaking.

But to start, we need to recall the 'usual sense' of the figure known as apostrophe. Or, rather, what were its usual senses during Antiquity. The story of the apostrophe is the story of a drastic simplification, from a wide plurality of senses to a single meaning. Therefore, my inquiry will consider Antiquity more than the Moderns. My 'Antiquity' will include early modern treatises and translations of the XVIth and XVIIth centuries, whereas my 'modernity' will start after Boileau's translation of Longinus, that is to say, roughly speaking, the XVIIIth century.

All this will be a commentary on Quintilian's brief remarks on *apostrophè*:²

¹ *On the Sublime*, ed. D.A. Russell (Oxford: 1970) 129. – I will refer to Longinus and not to the 'pseudo-Longinus': 'the author [of *On the Sublime*] conventionally referred to as an otherwise unknown Longinus' (Kennedy G.A., in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period*, ed. S.E. Porter (Leiden: 1997) 34).

² Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, IX, 2, §§ 38–39; henceforth quoted in D.A. Russell's translation (Cambridge: 2001): '[38.] Auersus quoque a iudice sermo, qui dicitur apostrophe, mire mouet, siue aduersarios inuadimus: "quid enim tuus ille, Tubero, in acie Pharsalica?" [Cicero, *Lig.* 9] siue ad inuocationem aliquam conuertimur: "uos enim iam ego, Albani tumuli atque luci" [Cicero, *Mil.* 85] siue ad inuidiosam inplorationem: "o leges Porciae legesque Semproniae!" [Cicero, *Verr.* V, 163] [39.] Sed illa quoque uocatur auersio quae a proposita quaestione abducit audientem: "non ego cum Danais Troianam excindere gentem / Aulide iuraui" [Virgil, *Aen.* IV, 425]. Quod fit et multis et uariis figuris, cum aut aliud expectasse nos aut maius aliquid timuisse simulamus aut plus uideri posse ignorantibus, quale est prohoemium pro Caelio.' The first words of § 38 are for Quintilian the

[38.] Speech 'averted' from the judge, which is called Apostrophe, is also remarkably effective, whether (1) we turn on the adversary ('What was that sword of yours doing, Tubero, in the field of Pharsalus?') or (2) proceed to some kind of invocation ('On you I call, ye hills and groves of Alba') or (3) to an appeal designed to create odium ('O Porcian and Sempronian laws!'). [39.] The term Apostrophe is also applied to anything which serves to distract the hearer from the question at issue: 'I never swore at Aulis with the Greeks / to uproot the race of Troy'. But this effect can be achieved by many different Figures, whenever we pretend either that we expected something else, or that we feared something worse, or that the ignorant may think that the matter in hand is more important than it is: compare the Prooemium of *Pro Caelio*.

First, I will recall the two traditional senses of the figure called apostrophe: Quintilian's numbers (2) and (1), *inuocatio* and *auersio ad aduersarium* (§ 38).³ We shall then proceed, in my second point, to a closer examination of the Demosthenes example, as analysed in chapter 16 of *On the sublime*, in which the famous oath conjuring up the dead of Marathon is neither an *inuocatio* nor an *auersio ad aduersarium*. Finally, in my third point, we will try to go further than these purely negative conclusions. In order to give this peculiar 'apostrophe' a positive meaning, we will need to consider, among other clues, Quintilian's paragraph 39 and the other sense he gives to *apostrophè*: *auersio ad rem*.

1. *The two usual senses of the figure called apostrophe: inuocatio and auersio ad aduersarium*

My argument here is quite simple: the current meaning, *inuocatio*, has superseded another one, *auersio*.

Today, an apostrophe is an invocation, an exclamatory address, especially to the absent or dead, or the non-human.⁴ As Bernard Lamy put it in 1715, with this figure one 'addresses the heavens, the earth, the rocks,

Latin equivalent of the Greek word *apostrophè*, cf. '*Sermonem a persona iudicis auersum* (apostrophè dicitur)' (IV, 1, 63), '*Sermo uero auersus a iudice*' (IV, 2, 106).

³ We will not take in account Quintilian's number (3): one may consider his *inploratio* as a particular sort of *inuocatio*.

⁴ The term *exclamatio* is restricted to apostrophe by *Rhet. Her.* IV, 22': Lausberg H., *Handbook of literary rhetoric*, ed. D.E. Orton and R.D. Anderson (Leiden: 1998) § 809 – *Rhet. Her.* does not have the word *apostrophe*, but *conpellatio* instead.

the forests', etc.⁵ His only examples are from the Bible. An afflicted David curses the mountains of Gilboa, where king Saul has just been killed in battle: 'Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain [...]'.⁶ Lamy's second and last example is the following: 'Isaiah apostrophes the heavens and the earth, let them give him the Messiah he is expecting so impatiently, *Drop down, ye heavens, from above* [...]'.⁷ Following rhetorical tradition, Lamy ranks the apostrophe among the vehement figures: 'An *apostrophe* is made by a man who, being extraordinarily moved, turns to all sides'.⁸ Such extraordinary emotion implies that the apostrophe is one of the figures partaking of the sublime.

But this is only the *inuocatio* of Quintilian, which is a specific case, when his general category is *auersio*, in English 'diversion'.⁹ As Heinrich Lausberg defines it, *auersio* or *apostrophè* is "turning away" from the normal audience (the judges) and the addressing of another, second audience, surprisingly chosen by the speaker'.¹⁰ 'Turning away' sheds light on the composition of *apostrophè* and *auersio*: *strophè* or *uersio*, 'turning'; *apo* or *a*, 'away'. The *OED* gives a dense and clear account of this former and larger meaning: 'A speaker or writer suddenly stops in his discourse, and turns to address pointedly some person or thing', and 'a person *present*'; 'modern use has extended it to the *absent* or the *dead*', but 'it is by no means confined to these, as sometimes erroneously stated'.¹¹ Then, the apostrophe was first and foremost a sort of interruption in one's discourse, along with a very physical 'turn' or 'turning' of the speaker's body. According to this broader definition, the apostrophe is connected with the whole

⁵ Lamy B., *La rhétorique ou l'art de parler* (1715), ed. C. Noille-Clauzade (Paris: 1998) 233 (cf. 240): 'il s'adresse au Ciel, à la terre, aux rochers, aux forêts, aux choses insensibles, aussi bien qu'à celles qui sont sensibles' (my English translation).

⁶ II Sm I, 21. I replace Lamy's text by the King James version.

⁷ Lamy, 233, quoting Is 45, 8: 'Isaïe apostrophe le ciel et la terre pour les prier de donner le Messie qu'il attendait avec tant d'impatience. *Cieux, envoyez d'en haut votre rosée* [...]'.
⁸ 'L'*apostrophe* se fait lorsqu'un homme étant extraordinairement ému, il se tourne de tous côtés'.

⁹ 'L'*apostrophe* signifie [originally] *conversion*' (Lamy, *La rhétorique* 233). Cf. the translation by H.E. Butler (Cambridge, 1921) of the beginning of Quintilian's § 38: '*Apostrophe* also, which consists in the diversion of our address from the judge'.

¹⁰ Lausberg, *Handbook of literary rhetoric* § 762. Mazzucchi C.M., 218, gives further references, à propos of *On the Sublime* 16, 2: 'Alessandro, *Peri schématôn* I 20 = pp. 23, 28–24, 20 vol. III Spengel; Tiberio, *Peri schématôn* 7 = pp. 61, 28–62, 5 vol. III Spengel, in cui è riportata la fine del § 208 con l'apostrofe ad Eschine che leggiamo anche nel cap. 16, 4 del *Sublime*; Phoibammon, *Peri schématôn* I 5 = pp. 49, 29–50, 2 vol. III Spengel'.

¹¹ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition (Oxford: 1989) s. v. *apostrophe*.

of the discourse, whereas in the specialized or modern definition, it has to do with the sort of persons or things apostrophized. In other words, much more emphasis was put on the *moment* when the apostrophe was used in a given speech.

Lamy himself is still remembering that important aspect, since he adds to his first example the classic words introducing an apostrophe, 'Et vous': '*Et vous, montagnes de Gelboë*', rather than the simple 'Mountains of Gilboa' given by the Bible.¹² *Et vous* is not an error, a mistranslation. On the contrary, it reveals what is going on, by firmly connecting the words that follow with the preceding passage. *Et vous* signals to the inattentive reader that this is an apostrophe, the addressing of another audience. Those two little words are already present in the Latin examples Quintilian gives for *apostrophè* as a trope or word-figure: '*et te, maxime Caesar*' (IX, 3, 24), '*at tu [...]* *Albane*' (IX, 3, 26).

In a later treatise like Lamy's, the *Et vous* is only a faint reminder of the former meaning. But if we jump back to 1555, we find in Antoine Fouquelin a description stressing the question of the moment in the speech. Indeed, Fouquelin creates a general category, the Interruption, which he defines as a 'discontinuation de propos', an interruption of the current topic, of the question at issue.¹³ This category includes four figures: digression, 'aversion' (i.e. apostrophe, *auersio*), reticence and correction.¹⁴ Fouquelin's *discontinuation* reveals the criterion at work, for it is the contrary of the *continuatio*. The latter term described, in Latin, the uninterrupted course of a discourse, a given speech or *oratio* ideally being an *oratio continua*, that is, without any interruption. Granted, in the case of the apostrophe, the interruption is not due to the opponent, the judges or the audience, but to the speaker himself. But in both cases the very act of interruption speaks of violent forces breaking the continuity of the speech: in Lausberg's words, the speaker 'cannot be kept within the normal channels between speaker and audience' (§ 762).

Following such a criterion, Fouquelin constantly refers to issues of continuity when introducing his examples of apostrophe. For instance, the poet Ronsard is addressing his rich friend Jean Brinon, and 'all of sud-

¹² At least in the Vulgate: 'Montes Gelboe nec ros nec pluviae veniant super vos'; *idem* in the translation by Lemaître de Sacy (died in 1684): 'Montagne de Gelboë, que la rosée et la pluie ne tombent jamais sur toi'.

¹³ Fouquelin A., *La rhétorique française*, in *Traité de poétique et de rhétorique de la Renaissance*, ed. F. Goyet (Paris: 2001) 385.

¹⁴ For *reticentia* and *correctio*, see Lausberg, *Handbook of literary rhetoric* §§ 887–889 and §§ 784–786.

den he turns away and addresses this glass',¹⁵ that is, the precious glass that Brinon, a new Maecenas, has given the poet. But before quoting four lines addressed to the glass, Fouquelin has taken pains to quote three lines addressed to Brinon. Likewise, he quotes six lines from Du Bellay, addressed to Paris ('Mère des arts, ta hauteur je salue...'), before quoting the two lines where the poet finally 'turns to king Francis I', 'détourne sa parole au roi François': 'Comment te peut assez chanter la France / Ô grand François, des neuf sœurs adoré?'¹⁶ In a modern treatise, the lines addressed to Paris would probably be described as an apostrophe, since they address a non-human. But this would be a serious mistake for Fouquelin and for the entire rhetorical tradition, since the criterion for them is only the fact of addressing a *new* audience.

To conclude this point, the emphasis on continuity and interruption means that the extraordinary emotion does not stem simply from the person addressed, be it the dead or some non-human, King Francis or the glass given by a Maecenas. There is also a very strong emotion caused by the surprise. The speaker was quietly addressing the judge(s), and all of a sudden he turns all his body towards the accused, he 'turns away from all others to one'.¹⁷ Applied to the young Tubero in *Pro Ligario*, such a dramatized effect is utterly disturbing, and as Cicero himself comments, 'the young man seems to be troubled'.¹⁸ To interrupt is to disrupt. The interruption is a rupture; it produces an effect of *raptus*, of the kind beloved by *On the sublime*. Therefore, when, in the *auersio ad aduersarium*, the speaker isolates his adversary, apostrophe is not at all, as Lausberg says, 'an emotional move of despair on the part of the speaker' (§ 762). It causes the despair of the person addressed, or rather 'apostrophized'.¹⁹ And we should

¹⁵ Fouquelin, *Rhétorique*, 388: 'incontinent il détourne sa parole à ce verre' (my translation).

¹⁶ Fouquelin, *Rhétorique*, 388, quoting Du Bellay, *Prosphonématique* 1–8; Fouquelin, *Rhétorique* 373, has already quoted the first six lines, as an example of 'salutation'.

¹⁷ Liddell H.G. and Scott R., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: 1968) s. v. *apostrophô*.

¹⁸ Cicero, *Lig.* 9: 'commoueri uidetur adulescens'.

¹⁹ For that unique wonder of a 'turning away' at the very beginning of a speech, see Loutsch C., *L'exorde dans les discours de Cicéron* (Bruxelles: 1994) 286–287, on Cicero, *Cat.* I, 1: 'Cicéron a dû accompagner cette apostrophe fracassante d'un geste en direction de Catilina. Surpris par la virulence du propos, les auditeurs suivent spontanément de leur regard étonné le geste du consul, son bras levé et pointé en direction de l'un d'entre eux. Et, à la faveur de la confusion créée pendant une fraction de seconde, leur attention se trouve détournée sur Catilina. L'effet immédiat est une inversion des fronts: il n'y a plus d'une part un consul isolé, de l'autre un Sénat réservé et hostile; désormais, le Sénat se retrouve regroupé, uni autour du consul, face à un Catilina isolé, mis au ban. [...] Cicéron s'érige en porte-parole d'un Sénat désormais uni: *abutere patientia NOSTRA [...] furor tuus*

finally note that *On the sublime* does describe the *auersio ad aduersarium*, until later in the treatise (27, 3), when Demosthenes addresses Aristogiton directly. As Russell points out, this recognizable move and what follows (27, 4) 'are in fact instances of apostrophe'.²⁰ This could be a sufficient argument for proving that the 'apostrophè' of 16, 2 is *not* an apostrophe in the classical senses of the term. Moreover, Russell does not mention the use in the treatise (27, 3) of two terms echoing *apostrophè*: near the end, the verb *apostrephein* ('*ton logon apostrepsen*, swinging his speech round on to Aristogiton', transl. Fyfe); and near the beginning, the substantive '*agchistrophos*', which means a quick change, a sort of volte-face. The latter word, on which I shall comment in my general conclusion, is in itself an echo of the more classic *apostrophè*.²¹

2. Demosthenes' oath (On the Crown, § 208) is not an apostrophe

The oath is certainly Demosthenes' most famous passage. The speaker connects the recent defeat of Athens against King Philip with the city's greatest victories of the past, in order to justify Demosthenes' own strategy – worth the crown his opponent Eschines is precisely denying him. In 16, 2, Longinus gives a famous analysis of this famous passage, in a clear attempt to emulate the sublime style of the original.

The analysis begins as follows. Demosthenes could have said, in a flat or natural manner ('*kata phusin*'): all right, you have been defeated, but nevertheless, you have been fighting for your liberty and Greece's liberty as well, and in doing so you have imitated the glorious examples of your

nos eludet. '[L]'apostrophe est ainsi au service d'une tactique familière à Cicéron, dont le but est de regrouper les amis et d'isoler l'adversaire'.

²⁰ *On the sublime*, ed. D.A. Russell, 146.

²¹ See especially *agchistrophôs* at 22, 1, about inversions (*huperbata*): 'under the stress of their excitement, like a ship before a veering wind, they lay their words and thoughts first on one tack then another, and keep altering the natural order of sequence' (translation W.H. Fyfe). Pigeaud J., in his ed. of Longinus (Paris and Marseille, 1991), 37: 'Il ne faut pas oublier une qualité toute sportive et liée à la jeunesse: l'agilité à se retourner (*to agchistrophon*, IX, 13), que Longin reconnaît aussi à Démosthène (XII, 3), en somme le coup de rein.' Hermogenes has only one *agchistrophos*, rather hard to understand (ed. Rabe, *Hermogenis Opera* 106, l. 7); the only one in Dionysius of Halicarnassus is translated as follows by G. Aujac: 'une telle harmonie [...] est instable dans l'accord grammatical' (*Comp.*, in *Opusculs rhétoriques*, ed. Aujac, VI, 22, 6). For *agchinoia* in Dionysius, see my conclusion.

ancestors, who fought – victoriously – in Marathon and Salamis.²² The long sentence which follows describes what Demosthenes actually said. This sentence ‘needs a lot of breaking up in translation’, says Russell, who translates as follows:²³

But instead of this, as though under inspiration and possession, he suddenly gives voice to the oath by the heroes of Greece – ‘By those who risked their lives at Marathon, you have not done wrong!’ Observe what he effects by this single figure of conjuration – here I call it apostrophe. He deifies his audience’s ancestors, suggesting that one should swear by men who fell so bravely just as though they were gods. He inspires the judges with the temper of those who risked themselves. He transforms his demonstration into an extraordinary passage of elevation and passion, and into the convincing appeal of this strange, amazing oath. At the same time he injects into his hearers’ minds a healing specific, so as to relieve them by these paeans of praise and make them as proud of the battle with Philip as of the triumphs of Marathon and Salamis.

The only aspect recalling my previous consideration is the ‘suddenly’ at the beginning, translating *exaiphnès*. Let us remember that there is a sudden change as well in the apostrophe described as an interruption: Demosthenes interrupts the normal flow of his discourse. This most important aspect is also stressed by Quintilian when he explains the last meaning of apostrophe or *auersio* – I shall come back to this last meaning in my own last point. But for now, I would like to stress, like Russell, that the oath is *not* an apostrophe in ‘the usual sense of this term’, or rather in the two usual senses of the term seen so far.

Firstly, the oath is not an *inuocatio*, an exclamatory address to the dead. It is true that the dead are mentioned; but the speaker still addresses the audience he was talking to, i.e. the people of Athens, ‘you’: ‘By those who risked their lives at Marathon, *you* have not done wrong!’ It would be an *inuocatio* if the grammatical structure were: ‘*You*, who risked your lives at Marathon, I invoke you, *they* have not done wrong!’ This formulation would match Cicero’s example of *inuocatio*, as given by Quintilian (IX, 2, 38): ‘*Vos enim iam ego, Albani tumuli atque luci*’ (Mil. 85).

Secondly, since the dead are not addressed, the oath is neither an *auersio*, that is, a ‘turning away’ from the normal audience and the addressing

²² Or, to quote the actual words of *On the Sublime* (transl. Fyfe): ‘You were not wrong, men of Athens, in undertaking that struggle for the freedom of Greece, and you have proof of this near home, for neither were the men at Marathon misguided nor those at Salamis nor those at Plataea.’

²³ *On the Sublime*, ed. D.A. Russell, 129.

of another audience. It would be such an *auersio* if we had: 'And you, who risked your lives'. This hypothetical formulation would recall the typical 'And you' ('Et vous') we have seen. You the people, and you the dead. I the speaker was speaking to you, the people of Athens, and now all of a sudden I address myself to your dead ancestors, and you the people become a *they*. But this is not what we have here.

Then, if the oath is not an apostrophe, what kind of a figure is it? The answer is quite trivial. The oath is an oath. More specifically, in the words of Longinus, a 'figure of conjuration, *omotikon skhèma*'. The praised Latin translation of 1612 adds *form*: 'a form and figure of conjuration, *jurisjurandi forma et figura*'.²⁴ This recalls Quintilian's words, since for Quintilian, Demosthenes' famous oath is '*illud ius iurandum per caesos in Marathone ac Salamine*' (this famous oath by those champions of the city who fell at Marathon and Salamis) (XII, 10, 24). One could think of yet another term, the figure of *obtestatio*, that is, the glorious dead are to be our *testes*, they must attest to our courage. To introduce such an idea of bearing witness, the English language typically uses 'by', and the Latin language '*per*' – '*per caesos in Marathone*', '*per sidera testor*',²⁵ etc. At any rate, the same Latin translator of 1612 links the *omotikon skhèma* with the *furor*, if not the sublime, since he adds in the margin: '*omotikon skhèma* or thought-figure (through which Demosthenes' fury is expressed)'.²⁶ The *jurisjurandi figura* is for him, as for Quintilian, quite enough to explain the *sublimitas* of Demosthenes in this passage.²⁷

But this is probably too simple an explanation for Longinus. For the conjuration is a routine figure, not necessarily sublime in itself. In Longinus's view, Demosthenes is indeed using a 'figure of conjuration', a

²⁴ Gabriel de Petra (Dalla Pietra), professor of Greek in Lausanne (Geneva: J. de Tournes, 1612) 86. For *form* as an equivalent of *figure*, see '*conformatio verborum / sententiarum*' (Cicero, *De Oratore* III, 201; Lausberg, *Handbook of literary rhetoric* § 602).

²⁵ Vergil, *Aen.* III 599. On *obtestatio* or *obsecratio*, see Lausberg, *Handbook of literary rhetoric* § 760; *obtestatio* is a very frequent term in Melanchthon's rhetorical analyses, and in his followers. See below its use in 1614 by Gaspar Laurent (1556–1636), who translates Hermogenes' *horkos* by '*per sancta obtestationem*' or '*iuramentum et obtestetatio*'.

²⁶ In the original, '*omotikon skhèma*' and '*Dianoias*' are given in Greek characters: '*omotikon skhèma figura* *Dianoias*, (*per quam furor Demosthenis in dicendo expressus*)'.

²⁷ Quintilian uses *sublimitas* just before, among other terms describing Demosthenes' style: '*ui, sublimitate, impetu, cultu, compositione superauit*' (XII, 10, 23). The famous oath is for Quintilian the climax of the orator's triumphs. – Cf. Anderson R.D., *Glossary of Greek rhetorical terms* (Leuven, 2000) 25: *apostrophè* in 16, 2 'describe(s) the rhetorical use of an oath' and 'a sublime use of this figure'; Demosthenes 'turns to make an oath not to the gods but to those who fought in the battle of Marathon. He thus both deifies the former Greek victors and enables his audience to identify with them in the fight against Philip.'

'je ne sais quoi' that the treatise calls an *apostrophè*. Hermogenes (second century AD) makes the same distinction, about the same example, but in his own words: 'That would no longer be simply an oath, but something else', this something else being added by what he calls a *methodos*. It is worth quoting in full (since we are in his chapter on Simplicity [*apheleia*], 'simple' here refers to that category):²⁸

To prove one's point by means of oaths rather than by using facts is also simple and reveals Character in the thought:²⁹ 'I call on all the gods and goddesses who rule Attica and Pythian Apollo,' etc. [Demosthenes, 18, 141] or 'First, Athenians, I pray all the gods and goddesses' [18, 1]. There are numerous such examples in Demosthenes, and all these oaths reveal Character and are simple. The effect is the same if one binds the audience or the opponent with an oath.³⁰ Oaths such as 'By Zeus and the gods, do not accept' [19, 78] are not maneuvers in a debate, but attempts to prove one's character and to be persuasive. But if a speaker casts a proof or some other point that is valuable to his argument in the form of an oath, that is not simple and does more than just reveal Character. That would no longer be simply an oath, but something else that has been cast into this form. It retains its original force, but also takes on some additional quality because of the way in which it is presented, such as 'No, I swear it by those of your ancestors who fought at Marathon,' etc. [18, 208]. This is a glorious example and a proof that it was customary for Athens to struggle and to take risks on behalf of the freedom of the Greeks. But it has been cast in the form of an oath. This has produced Brilliance and Grandeur [*lamprotès kai megethos*], but it is not simple and does not just reveal Character.

The end is more accurately translated by Gaspar Laurent (in 1614) and Michel Patillon. The something else added to the oath has been cast into a form or figure by using a *methodos*: an '*artificium*' (Laurent), a '*méthode*' (Patillon).³¹ The method is not a form, or in other words it is not a figure or *skhèma*. Rather, the form or figure stems from the method:

²⁸ *Peri tôn ideôn*, in *Hermogenis Opera*, ed. H. Rabe (Leipzig: 1913) 326–327; Latin translation by Gaspar Laurent, in *Hermogenis Ars oratoria absolutissima* (Geneva: 1614) 393–394; English translation by Cecil W. Wooten, in *Hermogenes, On Types of Style* (Chapel Hill and London: 1987) 73–74; French translation by Michel Patillon, in *Hermogenes, L'art rhétorique* (s. l.: 1997) 425–426.

²⁹ Trans. Patillon, *L'art rhétorique*: 'Il est encore naïf et éthique [*èthikos* and *aphelès*], en ce qui concerne la pensée, de garantir quelque chose par des attestations solennelles [*horkos*] et non par les faits'. Laurent: 'Praeterea simplex genus & moratum fit in sententiam, quando aliquid per sanctam obtestationem'.

³⁰ Trans. Laurent, *Ars oratoria*: 'Omnia autem illa sunt morata & simplicia, quae fiunt per sacrosancta: atque etiam si auditores obtestetur per sacrosancta aut aduersarium'.

³¹ And 'an approach' elsewhere in Wooten's translation, e.g. 'The approach [*methodouseis*] that is typical of real Brilliance is to introduce the thought directly' (ed. Rabe,

[‘But if a speaker casts a proof’ . . .] Toutefois si c’est une preuve ou un autre élément auxquels on applique une méthode [*methodos*] telle qu’ils prennent la figure d’une attestation solennelle, j’appelle alors cela autrement, mais non pas naïf ni éthique: en effet on n’aura plus là une attestation solennelle, mais autre chose, qu’une certaine méthode modifie en ce sens et qui, tout en gardant sa valeur propre, s’adjoint, par l’intervention de la méthode, quelque chose d’autre; par exemple: ‘non, par ceux de nos ancêtres qui sont allés se battre à Marathon’, etc. C’est là en effet un exemple illustre et une preuve du fait que la Cité a pour coutume de lutter et d’affronter les dangers pour la liberté des Grecs: l’application d’une méthode qui en fait une attestation solennelle a produit de l’éclat et de la grandeur, mais non pas de la naïveté ni de l’éthos. (transl. Patillon)

Si verò artificio adhibito tractes argumentum ad decertandum, aut aliquid aliud, aliquid diuersum erit & non simplex, neque moratum. Nam obtestatio vel iuramentum non est illud genus: sed per artificiosam tractationem aliquid aliud factum est, ita vt in illud genus transeat, conseruans tamen propriam vim suam, assumit etiam aliquid diuersum, tractandi modo. Vt, Non certè [. . .]. Artificio sic tractatum delabatur ad iuramentum & obtestationem factam: reddidit genus dicendi splendidum & magnum, sed non simplex, nec moratum, siue moribus quotidianis non vsurpandum. (transl. Laurent)

If we compare with Longinus, the general idea is the same. In *On the sublime*, ‘*omotikon skhèma*’ + ‘*apostrophè*’; in Hermogenes, ‘*horkou skhèma*’ + ‘*methodos*’. Although the figure is basic, it has a value added by the apostrophe or the method, whatever those terms mean. And this value added is what matters the most, whether it is the ‘sublime’ or, in Hermogenes’ words, ‘Brilliance and Grandeur’.³²

Thus ‘apostrophe’ (*apostrophè*) here for Hermogenes is not a figure, but a ‘method’ (*methodos*).³³ To conclude this point, let us reconsider the liti-

Hermogenis Opera 266, trans. Wooten, *On Types of Style* 34; trans. Laurent, *Hermogenis Ars oratoria* 307: ‘*Methodum adhibetis qua fiat hoc genus dicendi splendidum*’).

³² See also Gibert B., *La rhétorique ou les règles de l’éloquence* (1730), ed. S. Ben Mes-saoud (Paris, 2004) 282: ‘Les serments employés au lieu de preuves sont dans le simple, mais non pas quand on jure par autre chose que par les choses saintes, ou par les dieux comme par les païens, ou par le saint nom de Dieu comme dans la vraie religion. Ainsi le serment que fait Démosthène à Marathon n’est point dans le simple. Cicéron de même en fit un en sortant de charge à la fin de son consulat, qui est très singulier en son espèce, et il est sublime, quoiqu’il jure par les dieux.’

³³ Cf. a preceding passage of the *Peri tôn ideôn* (ed. Rabe, *Hermogenis Opera* 266–267, chapter on Brilliance; transl. Wooten, *On Types of Style* 34): ‘It is also typical of the approach [*methodos*] that produces Brilliance to speak noble sentiments nobly, as Demosthenes does when he says: “No, I swear by those of our ancestors who fought at Marathon,” etc. He could have said: “I advised you rightly to fight on behalf of the liberty of the Greeks. For those who fought at Marathon acted thus.” This would have been stated in a noble

gious sentence in Longinus: 'Observe what he effects by this single figure of conjuration [*omotikon skhèma*] – here I call it apostrophe [*hoper enthade apostrophèn egô kalô*].' Or, in the 1612 Latin translation: '*jurisjurandi forma et figura (quam hic ego Apostrophen voco)*'. I would like to underline *egô* and *enthade*. *Egô*: the Greek or Latin pronoun adds emphasis (in English one should write 'I call it apostrophe', in French, 'c'est moi qui appelle cette figure une apostrophe', and Carlo Maria Mazzucchi's translation reads, 'che io in questo passo chiamo apostrofe'). *Enthade* means 'here': in this particular case, Demosthenes' figure is an 'apostrophe', in my sense of the term. Likewise, in his own idiolect, Hermogenes calls it a 'method'. The emphasis is directed strongly towards a specific audience, the Roman reader of *On the sublime*, the 'dear Terentianus' of the opening, with whom Caecilius's own treatise was being read (1, 1). The *egô* is echoing a recurrent and impassioned conversation the author had on those topics with his friend. My dear, since together we have read the literary critics (together, i.e. aloud), *you* know what my propensities are, and *you* know that 'apostrophe' is one of them. The hypothesis is that Longinus is here quoting one of his favourite words, exactly as he quotes one of his catchphrases on sublime, precisely after a question supposedly asked by Terentianus.³⁴ All this betrays a vivid orality, and complicity, within an intellectual circle of friends engaged in some sort of *disputatio*, or serious and enthusiastic discussion of literary topics. In such a circle, buzzwords and phrases are circulating, they are coined for the occasion – and this idiolect has an extreme value but only inside the circle. 'Apostrophe' is one of those chic, mysterious words, as so too is the slogan-like sentence '*le sublime est l'écho de la grandeur d'âme*'.³⁵

way. But by using the oath [*eis horkon*] he has made the expression even nobler and has produced a brilliant passage.' Trans. Patillon, *L'Art rhétorique* 370: 'Une autre méthode éclatante consiste à énoncer les faits illustres de façon à en augmenter le lustre [...]: mais notre auteur en lui donnant la forme d'une attestation solennelle en a augmenté le lustre et lui a donné de l'éclat.' Trans. Laurent, *Hermogenis Ars oratoria* 308–309: 'Pertinet quoque ad methodum splendidam [...]. Sed orator ad iuramentum rem deduxit, sermonem reddens magnificentiorem atque splendidiorem.'

³⁴ 9, 2, '*tina, phêseis, tropon?*': 'How? you will ask. – Well, elsewhere I have written something like this, "Sublimity is the true ring of a noble mind" [*upsos megalophrosunè apèchèma*].'

³⁵ J. Pigeaud's translation (his italics) 64. One could also interpret in terms of complicity the fact, underlined in my own edition of Longinus, that the numerous hapax of the treatise are recoinng, in Greek, stock-phrases of the Latin rhetoric.

3. *Demosthenes' oath is an 'apostrophe', i.e. the quintessence of any figure*

So here we have an emblematic example, Demosthenes' oath upon the glorious dead, and an emblematic term that comments on this usage, the 'apostrophe', all of which stands at an emblematic place in the treatise. For one could easily consider chapter 16 the beginning of the (main) second part of *On the sublime*.³⁶ Up until chapter 15, one encounters general and lofty remarks on *megalophrosunè*, imitation and *phantasia*. Now we enter a sort of catalogue, more pedestrian, more classical in style, with its expected lists. The main part of the catalogue consists of figures – thought-tropes or *skhèmata* (chapters 16–29), word-tropes or *tropoi* (30–38) – plus an ending or *cauda* on the order of words, etc. (39–42). Hence chapter 16 – Demosthenes' oath – is the musical overture to the catalogue; chapter 17, its theoretical introduction; chapter 18, its first item, or interrogation. And one has to wait until chapter 27, the closing section of the list of *schemata*, to find some examples of apostrophes in the classical sense of the term.

Such an overture, *en fanfare*, is clearly trying to be as lofty as the previous considerations, and to prevent the following lists from being too pedestrian, too boring. We must therefore ourselves widen our focus, having thus far been intentionally short-sighted. I will now develop two sorts of arguments, namely, on the general meaning of *apostrophè* and *apostrephein*, and on the place of the passage on Marathon within a larger digression of *On the Crown*.

Even though today the word *apostrophe* has a very narrow and specialized meaning, the situation in Antiquity was quite the opposite. The word had a very broad range, it was for Greek speakers a living metaphor, and the substantive never lost its connection to the verb *apostrephein*. The same is true in Latin for *auersio* and *auertere*. We have here a good example of a very important rule for the reading of the rhetorical treatises, verb versus substantive. The verb shows us the essence of a given phenomenon, when in various contexts the substantive may have various senses, depending on its specific use *hic et nunc*.³⁷ This common situation

³⁶ Which actually announces five parts, in chapter 8. But, according to R. Granatelli ("Struttura del *De Sublimitate* e suoi valori pedagogici" *Rhetorica* 8, 4 (1990) 321–347), *On the Sublime* 'can be schematized according to a bipartite subdivision: (1) articulation of the subject matter, and (2) a pedagogical method that develops the rhetorical techniques related to that subject matter', so the treatise is definitely a rhetorical handbook.

³⁷ For other examples, see my commentary on Du Bellay's *Deffence and Illustration* ...: in French, *mot de liaison* describes a specific class of grammatical words, but the verb *lier* reveals the crucial phenomenon behind; etc.

is not good news if you see rhetoric as a list of lists, with well identified items, where ideally one substantive designs one situation, and one only. But it is good news if you are out to think about what is at stake in rhetorical theory – and for that purpose, we would need lists of the *verbs* used in the treatises, and not only of their substantives.

Therefore, a compilation like Lausberg's is forced to mention *auersio* twice. His index is nearly the only way to reunify the *membra disiecta*: 'aversio: I) general: 808; 848–851; 860; II) of the apostrophe 762'. We have seen sense number II. Preceded by the title 'apostrophe', Lausberg's §§ 762–765 are dealing with the usual sense of apostrophe. But we have not yet seen sense number I. Lausberg's §§ 848–851 are thus introduced by the title 'aversio': 'Apostrophe, discussed in §§ 762–765, stands in a wider systematic context: the figure comprises not only a turning away from the audience, but also a turning away from a matter being dealt with.' In order to illustrate this point, Lausberg's very first quotation is Quintilian's paragraph 39, quoted in my introduction. The next quotations given by Lausberg put it still more clearly: the *auersio* is the converting '*ad aliquam personam aut rem*'. So, here we have a third rhetorical sense: *auersio ad rem*.

The same Lausberg has little to say about the Greek word *apostrophè*.³⁸ He does not quote the numerous uses of the term by Dionysius of Halicarnassus – for instance, the changing of a plural into a singular. One has to look carefully at the end of Lausberg's II to find that 'Apostrophe is a particular case (cf. also Quint. *Inst.* 9.2.39) of the more general *metabasis*' (§ 765). And indeed *metabasis* – in Hermogenes, for instance – means either *auersio ad personam*³⁹ or *auersio ad rem*.⁴⁰ Again, *metabasis* is a very general term in Greek, referring to any kind of change. This discussion brings us back to Longinus's chapter 27. His two examples of *auersio ad aduersarium* (27, 3 and 4) are the conclusion of a group of chapters, 23–27, dealing in fact with *metabasis* (last word of 27, 1). This is well shown by

³⁸ His index lists only, s. v. *apostrophè*, three instances, §§ 271, 762 and 763; and § 271 gives the same meaning than § 762.

³⁹ Ed. Rabe, *Hermogenis Opera* 314, linked with *apostrophè*.

⁴⁰ Ed. Rabe, *Hermogenis Opera* 20 and 318. See Anderson, *Glossary* 25: *apostrophè* as 'turning away from' is connected to *metabasis*, *parenthesis*, *alloiôsis*. Anderson quotes a rare use by Alexander's *De Figuris* 1, 20: *apostrophè* as 'an accusation laid against one person but really intended for another'. Of little help in this instance is Rowe G.O. in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period*, ed. S.E. Porter (Leiden: 1997) 139 ('*apostrophè*, *auersio* [*ad aduersarium*']') and 145 ('*metabasis*, *auersio* [*ad rem*']'), without even a word-index to relate the two *auersio*.

the titles added by Boileau: 23, 'Du changement de nombre' (i.e. changing a singular into plural); 24, 'Des pluriels réduits en singuliers'; 25, 'Du changement de temps'; 26, 'Du changement de personnes'; 27, 'Des transitions imprévues'. All this summarizes Dionysius,⁴¹ and indeed Longinus's 23, 2 is very close to a similar example in Dionysius, the Syracusans (plural) becoming the people or *dêmos* (singular).⁴²

By checking the dictionaries and Lausberg's index, we have therefore come back to chapter 27 and the usual sense of apostrophe. In other words, we have totally missed the point of chapter 16. What is at stake there? My argument will now stress the place of the passage on Marathon within a larger digression by Demosthenes: *On the Crown*, 199–210. For in terms of turning away or changing – of *apostrophè* or *metabasis* –, a digression is in itself a turning away from one matter to another, an *auersio ad rem*. Moreover, the digression in this passage is named, by Demosthenes himself, a *paradoxon*.

The digression is clearly noted by the speaker, at the end, just after his § 210: 'But having been led to mention the noble deed of your ancestors, I perceive that I have passed over some edicts and transactions, which are material. I intend therefore to return whence I have digressed [*epanelthein*].'⁴³ The beginning of the digression is quite clear as well, § 199: 'But since he [Aeschinus] lays such mighty stress upon events, I will advance somewhat of a paradox [*paradoxon eipein*]. But, in the name of Jupiter, and all the gods, let none of you be surprised at the boldness of my expression [*tèn huperbolèn thaumasè*], but let him candidly examine what I say.'⁴⁴ So the very beginning of the digression is announcing, as if with a fanfare, that the audience is about to hear something very special.

Paradoxon is the equivalent of the Latin *admiratio*.⁴⁵ The term in general means something that is against the audience's expectation. More spe-

⁴¹ As well shown by Mazzucchi C.M., *ad loc.* Anderson, *Glossary* 16, links those chapters 23–27 not to *metabasis* but to the related *alloiôsis*, this term being precisely the one used by Caecilius in his treatise (*Fr.* 75).

⁴² Dionysius, *Amm.* 2 (in Aujac, VIII, 13, 1–2). In those chapters 23–27, *On the sublime* use once *metabasis* and *metabolè* (23, 1) and twice *antimetathesis*: '*tôn prosôpon antimetathesis*' (26, 1; cf. Dionysius, *Thuc.*, Aujac VII, 24, 7, '*prosôpon apostrophais*'); '*antimethistatai*' (27, 1).

⁴³ Translation by A. Portal (Oxford: 1814).

⁴⁴ Or, in Rowe G.O. translation, under the heading 'Prodiorthosis' ('attempt to prepare the audience for a shocking or offensive statement'): 'I wish to say something surprising; and, by Zeus and the gods, let nobody marvel at this extreme statement but attend with good will what I say' (in Porter, *Handbook* 130).

⁴⁵ Cf. the '*genus admirabile*' in the *exordium*, rendering *paradoxon skhêma*: Lausberg, *Handbook of literary rhetoric* § 64.3.

cifically, it is used by Cicero and Quintilian to describe a sort of digressive passage within a discourse. For them, an *admiratio* is a long and pathetic interruption of the *narratio*, as is the case here (roughly speaking: this third and last part of the *On the Crown* is merely a sort of narration). For the narration should have, says Quintilian, 'passages which charm: admirations, expectations, unexpected turns, conversations between persons, all kinds of emotion'.⁴⁶ An *admiratio* is therefore a surprising digression. Such a passage has obviously to do with some sort of sublime. Demosthenes' words *tèn huperbolèn thaumasè* refer very closely to two ideas beloved by Longinus, the figure of *huperbolè* and the *thaumaston*, aptly added by Boileau as a subtitle of the treatise, 'Du merveilleux dans le discours'. *Admiratio* also recalls the *mire* Quintilian uses when first discussing the apostrophe: '*mire mouet*' (IX, 2, 38). *Inuocatio* or *auersio ad aduersiarum* are also surprising and moving digressions. If we turn back to the famous oath, we now see that the oath is a short digression (§ 208) within a larger one (§§ 199–210); it is an interruption within an interruption.

It is time to consider what all this means. A digression is in itself a diversion, and in this sense it is an *auersio ad rem*. To quote again the words of Quintilian, '*auersio quae a proposita quaestione abducit audientem*': the *auersio* 'distracts the hearer from the question at issue' (IX, 2, 39). Later in the same chapter, Quintilian evokes the famous oath as a way of diverting the attention: '*dum aliud agere uidemur, aliud efficimus*', we may 'achieve another object from that which we seem to aim at' (IX, 2, 62). So, when Demosthenes in § 199 announces a *paradoxon*, a digression that will surprise the audience, the surprise is not that important. The so-called surprise masks the real one, still to come. The announced surprise is, so to speak, a routine, as so too is the *auersio ad aduersarium* in Cicero. Everyone in the audience expects Cicero to address his adversary directly, at one point or another. In such a long speech as *On the Crown*, the audience is pleased to have a digression; if it is a surprise, it is a welcome and long-awaited one. But then, the oath comes as a real surprise, and is truly unexpected. We were rather quietly inside a comforting passage on noble and patriotic sentiments, and the noblest of all for Athenians, namely, that they object at all costs to any kind of slavery (§ 203 '*asphalôs douleuein*', cf. Thucydides, II, 63, 5). And all of a sudden,

⁴⁶ Quintilian, IV, 2, 107: 'ut habeat narratio suauitatem, admirationes, expectationes, exitus inopinatos, colloquia personarum, omnes adfectus' (I modify the translation by Russell, who gives 'surprise, and rouse expectations, as well as unexpected turns', etc.); Quintilian here explicitly quotes Cicero, *Part. 32*.

this leads the orator to burst into the oath. The surprise is that we had not at all expected such an outburst. It is a real surprise, within an ordinary one, that we had not been able to anticipate it.

The same analysis applies to the other famous outburst by Cicero against Tubero (*Lig.* 9). Here the passage we are in is the *licentia* or *par-rhèsia* which began at § 6. Tubero himself thinks, as does everybody else, that the topic is the relationship between Caesar and Cicero, the latter acknowledging ‘boldly’ (*licentia*) that he was on Pompey’s side, when in fact he is praising the dictator.⁴⁷ No one had anticipated, not even Caesar, that it would be applied to Tubero himself, who was on Pompey’s side as well, with sword in hand at Pharsalus. The audience, kept busy deciphering the real meaning of the *licentia*, did not foresee the attack against the young adversary. For a surprise, it is quite a surprise indeed. Caesar himself, as reported by Plutarch, was so struck that he dropped the documents he was holding.⁴⁸

Cicero, like Demosthenes, has been using some sort of prodigious volte-face or coup de théâtre: in other words, a twist or ‘apostrophe’. And *this* is what Longinus calls a figure: ‘let us speak now of all the figures; but let me show you, first, what *is* a figure’. An oath, yes, but what an oath, what an orator, what an ability for volte-face!

We may now conclude. The intellectual date of *On the sublime* is not a problem: the treatise is a reaction to Caecilius’s own treatise, published around the time of Augustus. This reaction, for our concern, takes a stance on a controversial issue, that is, the definition of the figures or rather the *skhèmata*. We know from Quintilian’s chapter IX, 1, that this theoretical question was part of an intense debate within the many schools of rhetoric, in Rome, from Dionysius of Halicarnassus to Quintilian – that is, roughly speaking, from Augustus’s principedom to the end of the first century AD.⁴⁹ We also know that the *skhèmata* are one of the rare instances

⁴⁷ On *licentia*, see Lausberg, *Handbook of literary rhetoric* § 761. I have developed on *Lig.* 9 in another article (Goyet F., “Les figures de pensée comme grands blocs, unités minimales pour construire un discours”, *Quintilien ancien et moderne*, ed. P. Galand-Hallyn, F. Hallyn, C. Lévy et W. Verbaal (Turnhout: 2010) 527–557.

⁴⁸ *Cic.* 39, 7.

⁴⁹ I am not very much interested by the vexed question of the dating of Longinus, usually raising the problem of the actual meaning of chapter 44 (the end of the Republic at 44, 2 and the ‘world’s peace’ of 44, 6): the dating would bring little to the intimate understanding of the treatise. I have not seen Crossett J.M. and Arieti J.A., *The Dating of Longinus* (Pennsylvania State University: 1975), who argue for a probable date around the middle of the century, under Nero; for G.A. Kennedy, ‘Date of composition and authorship

when Quintilian strongly disagrees with Cicero. Thanks to the word *apostrophè*, we may now sketch out what was at stake in this debate. Indeed, since *strephein* or *trepein* both mean 'to turn', this gives us a clue to re-reading Quintilian. Let us just have a look at his two uses of *uertere* or *auertere* (IX, 1, 2 and 20).

At the very beginning of the chapter, Quintilian remarks that 'many have held that Figures are Tropes': '*plerique has [figuras] tropos esse existimauerunt*'. One of the reasons given is that tropes '*uertant orationem*', they 'make changes in speech' (IX, 1, 1–2) – *tropos* coming from the verb *trepein*.⁵⁰ Longinus is surely one of those *plerique*. At the beginning of 16, 1, he uses *tropos* to name what the *skhèmata* are about, 'for these too, if rightly handed [*skeuazètai tropon*], may be an important element in the sublime', or, in Boileau's translation (my emphasis): 'lorsqu'on leur donne le *tour* qu'elles doivent avoir'. So, when our author comments on Demosthenes' oath by saying 'here *I* call it *apostrophè*', it means in Latin 'this is what *I* call *uertere orationem*', what I call changing either words or the order of the speech (*oratio*, 'style' or 'speech'). By saying so, the author is trying to escape a superficial view of the *tropos*, a view he feels is shared by his friend Terentianus. The *tropos* is, in Quintilian's terms, '*sermo a naturali et principali significatione tralatus*', 'the transference of expressions from their natural and principal signification' (IX, 1, 4).⁵¹ This standard definition echoes the way Demosthenes' oath differs from the

are debatable, with perhaps majority sentiment now inclining to the second century AD' (in ed. Porter, *Handbook* 34). Caecilius could of course have been read with passion during the second century. But the possibility of a reading just after publication seems to me more consistent with the rhetorical issues of *On the Sublime*, as has been developed by C.M. Mazzucchi. The same Mazzucchi recalls that the *gens* of the Cassii Longini was, under Augustus, an important intellectual and political circle, longing for the Republic: in his view, a 'Dionysius Longinus' could then be a Greek (Dionysius) who acquired the roman citizenship, and was called Longinus to show his link with that family.

⁵⁰ Quintilian adding: 'or from their making *changes* in speech (hence their alternative name "Moves")' – '*unde et motus dicuntur*'.

⁵¹ Or, in IX, 1, 11: '*proprie schema dicitur, in sensu uel sermone aliqua a uulgaris et simplici specie cum ratione mutatio, sicut nos sedemus, incumbimus, respicimus*'. In its proper meaning, *schema* means a purposeful deviation in sense or language from the ordinary simple form: the analogy is now with sitting, bending forwards, or looking back'; cf., at II, 13, 8 (where it refers to *auersio ad rem*, a changing in the *ordo* of the speech), '*Expedi autem saepe mutare ex illo constituto traditoque ordine aliqua, et interim decet, ut in statutis atque picturis uidemus uariari habitus, uultus, status*'. So *mutatio* is the same as *uariatio* (and *uertere*) and *translatio*; as, in Greek, *metabolè*, *apostrophè*, etc. Cicero's views are quite different: but see the first *skhèmata* he thinks of (*Orator*, 137): '*Sic igitur dicit ille [orator] ut uerset saepe multis modis eadem et in una re haereat in eademque commoretur sententia; [...] ut declinet a proposito deflectatque sententiam [...]*'.

'natural use' (*'kata phusin chrêsis'*, *On the Sublime*, 16, 2). In Longinus, the phrase introduces the normal or 'natural' style Demosthenes should have used.⁵² But be careful, my dear Terentianus: diverging from standard expressions is not an aim in itself. The speaker's goal was not to create surprise for the sake of surprise. Surprise is but the superficial side of the whole process. The speaker does not want to surprise the audience, he wants to dominate it. The point is not mainly about aesthetics or stylistics ('théorie de l'écart'),⁵³ but rather about rhetoric, with full persuasion at stake. Not only beauty but also force. For Quintilian, thought-figures and word-figures 'add force and charm' (*'et uim rebus adiciunt et gratiam praestant'*, IX, 1, 1): force *before* charm, *uis* before *gratia*. For Longinus, the point is exactly the same. At the end of his analysis, he says: 'in all this by the use of the figure he is enabled to carry the audience away with him [*sunarpasas ôcheto*];' or, in Boileau's translation, 'et par tous ces différents moyens renfermés dans une seule figure, il les entraîne dans son parti'.

The second use of interest for us in Quintilian is *auersa* (IX, 1, 20):

the Figure [...] lends our words credibility and insinuates itself into the judges' mind where it is not noticed. [20.] For, just as in fencing it is easy to see, parry, and repel direct blows and simple, straightforward strokes, while sidestrokes and feints [*auersae tectaeque*] are less easy to detect, and the art lies in making a threat which is not related to your real object [*aliud ostendisse quam petas artis est*], so oratory which lacks guile fights only with weight and drive, whereas if you use feints and vary your approach you can attack the flanks or the rear, draw off the defence, and, as it were, duck to deceive.

We now recognize, in '*aliud ostendisse quam petas*', another formulation of the '*dum aliud agere uidemur, aliud efficimus*' (IX, 2, 62) by which Quintilian characterizes Demosthenes' oath. I would say that this beautiful description is like an echo of Longinus, with the same taste for long metaphors, rather infrequent in Quintilian. An echo of Longinus, or more generally of the Greek circles avidly discussing the Caecilius's treatise. The

⁵² The phrase refers to the Stoic philosophy of language. Cf. the same use of '*kata phusin*' in Dionysius (*Dem.*, transl. Aujac, V, 9, 3), where it is linked to *apostrephein*: Demosthenes, like Thucydides, 'détourne et éloigne [*apostrephein*] le langage de son emploi ordinaire [*exêllachthai kai apestraphthai tèn dialecton ek tôn en ethei kai kata phusin*], pour aller contre les habitudes de la plupart des gens et contre aussi le vœu de la nature'.

⁵³ See the foot-note in Lausberg, *Handbook of literary rhetoric's* § 499 (first written in 1960): 'the definition of the "figura" [...] corresponds to what present-day French stylistics understands by "écart".' But the *écart* theory is itself quite debatable, and indeed has been harshly debated in France during the 1960s and 70s.

English translation of 'tectae' by 'feints' is very interesting as well, since it etymologically refers to *ingere*. It suggests Quintilian had elaborated his own theory of the *figura* as *ficta* or *simulata* through a meditation of the profound insights on *auertere* he found in the Greek discussions of the first century, discussions with which he was obviously familiar. At the very least, Quintilian's §§ 38–39 on *apostrophè* betray an awareness of what was at stake, among Greek circles, behind this apparently banal term.

The beautiful description closely reminds us of the prefix *agchi* in *agchistrophos*, the word describing a quick change, a sort of volte-face. We have seen that this rare prefix is cherished in *On the sublime*. It is present as well in Dionysius.⁵⁴ For that critic, a soldier-like orator like Iphicrates is a specialist of the straightforward stroke; he does not have the grace or *charis* of a Lysias. He has only '*stratiôtikè authadeia kai alazoneia*', rather than '*rhètorikè agchinoia*' (in Aujac's translation, 'arrogance et vantardise de soldat' and not 'finesse oratoire'). In Quintilian's terms, he 'lacks guile': '*astu caret*'. The soldier-like Iphicrates is the rare example of an absence of *figurae*, or in Dionysius's terms, of an absence of *agchinoia*, and in Longinus's, of *agchistrophè*, of *apostrophè*. With this kind of speaker, you know from the start what is going to happen, while *agchinoia* or *astutia* stresses the orator's ability secretly to design a real surprise, a successful diversion or *auersio* – and hence to be, strictly speaking, *versatile* (*uersa-tilis*, from *uersare*, itself coming from *uertere*).

Quintilian is reusing and synthesizing the best of what a century of Greek discussions had to offer him, including (or not) Longinus's treatise. But the *Institutio* shows his firm opposition to the consequences of versatility, namely an excessive and in his view superficial praise of those admirable passages, *admirationes*, which arouse thunderous applause. The *Institutio* takes a stance on a controversial issue, and its demarcation line is given by Fouquelin's criterion: discontinuity vs continuity. Quintilian like Horace is strongly supporting the beauties of continuity, of the coherent construction of a whole. Longinus is, no less strongly, supporting the beauties of discontinuity: he loves interruptions, hyperbates, *metabasis*, etc. – in short, everything that recalls the need for an orator, gifted with a grand ethos and a great ability, to grasp the occasion or *kairos*. In a word, or a pun, *On the sublime* is the *antistrophè* of Quintilian. It is another *version* of rhetoric, a *diverting* one: a welcome diversion from the standard version.

⁵⁴ *Lys.*, ed. Aujac II, 12, 6.

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LONGINUS AND POETIC IMAGINATION IN LATE RENAISSANCE LITERARY THEORY

Eugenio Refini

Introduction

The history of poetics and rhetoric in the Italian Renaissance still lacks a complete account of the diffusion of Longinus' treatise *On the Sublime*. The critical bibliography is indeed quite rich, but scholars have usually approached the problem from a limited perspective. After the seminal catalogue of first editions, translations and commentaries published by Bernard Weinberg in 1950,¹ the most relevant studies on the influence of Longinus on 16th and 17th century Italian artistic and literary culture are by Gustavo Costa, whose numerous articles skilfully focus on familiarity of some Italian humanists and poets with the treatise *On the Sublime*.² Francesco Robortello, Paolo Manuzio and Francesco Porto, who edited the Greek text respectively in 1554, 1555 and 1569, were not the only scholars working on Longinus.³

¹ Weinberg B., "Translations and Commentaries of Longinus *On the Sublime* to 1600: a Bibliography", *Modern Philology* 47, 3 (1950) 145–151. Cf. idem, ps. Longinus, *Dionysius Cassius*, in Kristeller P.O. – Cranz F.E. (eds.), *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum: Medieval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries*, vol. II (Washington D.C.: 1971) 27–42.

² Costa G., "Paolo Manuzio e lo Pseudo-Longino", *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 161 (1984) 60–77; idem, "Appunti sulla fortuna dello Pseudo-Longino nel Seicento: Alessandro Tassoni e Paganino Gaudenzio", *Studi secenteschi* 25 (1984) 123–143; idem, "The Latin Translations of Longinus' *Peri Ypsous* in Renaissance Italy", in Schoeck R.J. (ed.), *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Bononiensis. Proceedings of the Fourth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Bologna, 26 August to 1 September 1979* (Binghamton, N.Y.: 1985) 224–238; idem, "Un annoso problema: Tasso e il Sublime", *Rivista di Estetica* 27 (1987) 49–63; idem, "Pietro Vettori, Ugolino Martelli e lo Pseudo Longino", in Russo L. (ed.), *Da Longino a Longino: i luoghi del Sublime* (Palermo: 1987) 65–79; idem, "Storia del Sublime e storia ecclesiastica", *Aevum Antiquum* 3 (2003) 319–350. Cf. Mattioli E., "Gli studi di Gustavo Costa sul Sublime in Italia", *Studi e problemi di critica testuale* 36 (1988) 139–155.

³ *Dionysii Longini rhetoris praestantissimi liber de grandi sive sublimi orationis genere. Nunc primum a Francisco Robortello Utinensi in luce editus [...]* (Basel, Johannes Oporinus: 1554); *Dionysii Longini de sublimi genere dicendi* (Venice, Paolo Manuzio: 1555); *Aphthonius, Hermogenes et Dionysius Longinus, praestantissimi artis Rhetorices magistri, Francisci Porti Cretensis opera industriaeque illustrati atque expoliti* (Geneva, Johannes Crispinus: 1569).

I will first present a synthetic account summarising what we actually know about the diffusion of Longinus' work throughout the Italian Renaissance. The draft will consider the manuscript tradition of the treatise, as well as the diffusion of the text by means of early printed editions; it will then focus on Renaissance translations and commentaries, both published and unpublished, for they help us understand how scholars read Longinus in the 16th and 17th centuries. In the second part of the paper, I will consider – through the case study of Lorenzo Giacomini's *Discorso del furor poetico* (1587) – a particular aspect of the treatise *On the Sublime*, namely the notion of *phantasia*, for it seems to be one of the most attractive Longinian terms, with respect to late Renaissance literary taste. After a close reading of Giacomini's *Discorso*, which is widely indebted to Longinus, I will approach the way Renaissance readers dealt with the notion of *phantasia* as discussed in chapter XV of the treatise *On the Sublime*. Humanistic translations of the text will help us to understand the important connection among *phantasia* and other rhetorical notions such as *ekplexis*, *enargeia* and allegory, which played a key role in Renaissance conceptions of the poetical imagination. In closing, I will call attention to the specifics of Giacomini's "physiological" reading of Longinus, in a cultural context in which – at least from the point of view of literary critics and theory – the originality of the treatise *On the Sublime* was not fully grasped.

Textual tradition and diffusion of Longinus in Renaissance Italy

Longinus began to circulate among Renaissance scholars long before the mid-16th century printed editions. As Carlo Maria Mazzucchi pointed out in the preparatory study for his critical edition of the treatise, the history of the Longinus manuscript tradition is in fact mainly humanistic.⁴ Except for the codex Parisinus Graecus 2036, which dates from the 10th century, all the other extant manuscripts of Longinus were copied during the Renaissance. Their histories are indeed very interesting, for they involve many relevant figures of Italian Humanism such as, among the others, Basilios Bessarion, Janus Lascaris, Niccolò Ridolfi, Antonio Eparco, Fulvio Orsini, Pietro Vettori, Ugolino Martelli, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza.

⁴ Mazzucchi C.M., "La tradizione manoscritta del *Peri Ypsous*", *Italia medievale e umanistica* 32 (1989) 205–226. Cf. idem (ed.), *Dionisio Longino. Del sublime* (Milano: 1992).

Robortello's 1554 *editio princeps* and Manuzio's 1555 competing editions of Longinus gave rise to a larger diffusion of the text, which was soon translated from Greek into Latin: Domenico Pizzimenti and Pietro Pagano's translations, respectively published in 1566 and 1572, are not in fact the only ones extant.⁵

Gustavo Costa disclosed the importance of a still unpublished and anonymous Latin translation currently preserved in the Vatican Library, ms. Vat. Lat. 3441 (ff. 12r–31r).⁶ Unfortunately we know nothing about the history of the manuscript, except the name of its important owner, Fulvio Orsini (1529–1600), librarian in the service of cardinals Ranuccio and Alessandro Farnese.⁷ From his youth and until his death, Fulvio Orsini worked for the Farneses, quickly becoming a prominent figure in their circle, as well as playing a primary role in Roman cultural life in the second half of 16th century. His most important achievement was the establishment of one of the richest private libraries in early modern Europe: Orsini collected manuscripts and rare books, revealing acute skill in selecting precious documents.⁸ Based on the palaeographical expertise of Augusto Campana, Costa suggested assigning the translation to Fulvio Orsini himself, who also owned a Greek testimony of the treatise (the current ms. Vat. Gr. 1417).⁹ As regards the date, Bernard Weinberg followed the opinion of Giovanni Mercati, who brought it back up to the first half of 16th century.¹⁰ If that is indeed the case, it would mean that the Vatican *De altitudine et granditate orationis* preceded Robortello's *editio princeps* and was therefore the first Latin translation of Longinus ever known.

However, Costa's remarks on Orsini's translation go farther, for he emphasises the affinity between Longinian poetics of sublimity and Michelangelo Buonarroti's masterworks. The reference to the great artist is not gratuitous, by virtue of his relationship with the Farnese and

⁵ *Dionysii Longini Rhetoris Praestantissimi liber de Grandi orationis genere*, Domenico Pizzimentio Vibonensi interprete (Naples, Johannes Maria Scotus: 1566); *Dionysii Longini De Sublimi dicendi genere liber a Petro Pagano latinitate donatus* (Venice, Vincenzo Valgrisi: 1572).

⁶ Costa, "The Latin Translations" 224–230; idem, "Pietro Vettori, Ugolino Martelli" 65; idem, "Storia del Sublime" 330. Cf. Weinberg, "Translations and Commentaries" 146.

⁷ Nollac P. de, *La bibliothèque de Fulvio Orsini: contributions à l'histoire des collections d'Italie et à l'étude de la Renaissance* (Paris: 1887).

⁸ As regards the constitution of Orsini's library, cf. Nollac, "La Bibliothèque" *passim*, which also provides a fundamental biography of the humanist.

⁹ Mazzucchi, "La tradizione manoscritta" 214.

¹⁰ Costa, "The Latin Translations" 227; Weinberg, "Translations and Commentaries" 146.

Orsini himself: summing up Costa's clues, the circulation of Longinus in the Farnesian *entourage* during the last years of the artist's life may have played an important role in the predilection for Buonarroti's art, as well as in the interpretation of his artistic experience in terms of sublimity.¹¹

Otherwise, the Vatican translation is not the only Longinian document waiting for an exhaustive study and a modern edition. The first Italian translation of the treatise, which is by the Florentine scholar Giovanni da Falgano and dated 1575, is still unpublished and preserved in the National Library in Florence,¹² while a Latin version by Leone Allacci, written before 1631 and followed by an extensive commentary, lies among the humanist's autograph papers in the Vallicelliana Library in Rome.¹³ An attentive study of such documents, at least partly philological, would result in a better overview of the first stages of Longinus' diffusion in modern Europe.

As regards scholars' knowledge of Longinus, Gustavo Costa focused on some interesting and important cases. The first one is obviously Paolo Manuzio. If his philological interest in the treatise *On the Sublime* first came to light in the 1555 edition of the Greek text, the editor's acquaintance with the rhetorical ideas expressed by Longinus appeared – according to Marc Fumaroli – in his *Discorso intorno all'ufficio dell'oratore* as well.¹⁴ By contrast, Costa himself retrenched the assumed Longinian frame of the *Discorso*: Manuzio seems in fact to set a limit to Longinus' disruptive conception of *logos* in favour of a more traditional Ciceronian approach.¹⁵ Nevertheless, as Fumaroli showed in his fundamental book *L'Âge de l'éloquence*, the treatise *On the Sublime* undoubtedly played a

¹¹ Costa, "The Latin Translations" 228–229. I tried to contemplate Michelangelo's possible acquaintance with Longinus: his writings, though extremely suggestive as regards the possibility of an interpretation in terms of longinian sublimity, do not reveal a conscious knowledge of Longinus' categories. Nonetheless, some typical ideas of Michelangelo's conception of artistic creation expressed in his poems and letters deserve, in my opinion, a broader analysis. Even if they mainly go back to platonic components, some interesting analogies with longinian notions are not missing.

¹² *Libro della altezza del dire di Dionysio Longino rhetore tradotto dalla greca nella toscana lingua da Giovanni di Niccolò da Falgano fiorentino in Fiorenza* (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, ms. Magl. VI.33). Cf. Weinberg, "Translations and Commentaries" 150.

¹³ Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, ms. Allacci, XXIX.1–8.

¹⁴ Fumaroli M., *L'Âge de l'éloquence. Rhétorique et "res literaria" de la Renaissance au seuil de l'époque classique* (Geneva: 1980) 165–167.

¹⁵ Costa, "Paolo Manuzio e lo Pseudo-Longino".

significant role in the composition of Jesuit rhetoric and poetics.¹⁶ From this perspective, the diffusion of Longinian ideas in Jesuit contexts, even if curbed by the typical scholastic approach of the *ratio studiorum*, is surely worth examining.

Among others, Florentine philologist Pietro Vettori stands out for his intimate knowledge of Longinus. As Costa revealed in his study devoted to Vettori and Ugolino Martelli, the two scholars helped each other in supplying and exchanging Greek manuscripts between Rome and Florence. Their letters attest for example, that Vettori asked Martelli to send him a manuscript copy of Longinus in 1559 (moreover, we know that Martelli obtained two codexes of the treatise for his Florentine master). There are no Longinian traces in Vettori's commentary on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1548), but Longinus appears as an important frame of reference both in the commentaries on Aristotle's *Poetics* (1560) and Demetrius' *On Style* (1562), as well as in later editions of the *Variarum Lectionum libri* (1569, 1582).¹⁷

However, the most tangible influence of the Longinian notion of the sublime occurs in the late 16th century poetics of *meraviglia*: from that perspective, it is enough to think about Franceco Patrizi's *Poetica*, which is the most Longinian text in Italian Renaissance literary theory, focusing above all on astonishment and wonder produced by the poet. Terms like *meraviglia*, *stupore* and *estasi* become the keywords of an idea of artistic and poetic creation which perfectly fits in with the Longinian notion of the sublime.¹⁸

A case study: Lorenzo Giacomini's Discorso del furor poetico (1587)

Despite such a wide circulation, just a few authors throughout the Renaissance explicitly mention Longinus or quote passages from the treatise *On the Sublime*. The particular nature of the treatise, which is not scholastic, as well as the difficulty of the text, limited its diffusion in a

¹⁶ Fumaroli, *L'Age de l'éloquence*, *passim*; cf. idem, "Rhétorique d'école et rhétorique adulte: remarques sur la perception européenne du traité *Du Sublime* au XVI^e et au XVII^e siècle", *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 86 (1986) 33–51.

¹⁷ Costa, "Pietro Vettori, Ugolino Martelli" *passim*.

¹⁸ Vasoli C., "Schede patriziane sul *De Sublime*", in Casertano G. (ed.), *Il Sublime. Contributi per la storia di un'idea* (Napoli: 1983) 161–174. Such an approach is obviously shared by Baroque culture: 17th century poetics is in fact actually influenced by Longinus, as proved by the *querelle* between Alessandro Tassoni and Giuseppe Aromatari (cf. Costa, "Appunti sulla fortuna dello Pseudo-Longino nel Seicento").

context in which the scholastic approach to literary and artistic theory was predominant.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the notion of the sublime as conceived by Longinus seems to leave a mark in the debate on poetry. As regards the question of style, sublimity is a part of the wider notion of high and noble style treated by other rhetoricians as well. From this perspective, Demetrius' *On Style* and Hermogenes' *On Types of Style* offer an easier and more complete approach to the definition of a sublime stylistic register.²⁰ However, Longinian sublimity is something more than a simple stylistic notion, for the sublime is first of all a state of mind (as Longinus himself affirms, 'sublimity is the echo of a great soul').²¹ Longinus definitely offers an alternative choice with respect to the classical notion of *mimesis* as imitation of nature found in the scholastic readings of Aristotle and Horace.²² He brings something new because of his different way of looking at poetry. Considering literature as a particular means of communication in which the dimension of emotional involvement of both the author and the reader is the most important one, the treatise *On the Sublime* gives space to an idea of artistic creation which focuses on the extraordinary intellectual profusion of the ingenious artist.

It is therefore interesting further to consider Lorenzo Giacomini's *Discorso del furor poetico*, an important, though marginal and neglected document concerning Longinus' influence on late 16th century debates on the nature of poetry and the poetic imagination. Among the many authors studied by Bernard Weinberg, only Giacomini explicitly mentions Longinus when discussing the notion of poetic ecstasy in his academic lecture devoted to poetic inspiration, which was given in Florence before the Accademia degli Alterati in 1587.²³ Lorenzo Giacomini (1552–1598),

¹⁹ Logan J.L., "Longinus and the Sublime", in Norton G.P. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. III. *The Renaissance* (Cambridge: 1999) 529–539. As regards the scholastic approach involving the diffusion of Horace's *Art of Poetry* as well as Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, cf. Weinberg B., *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Chicago: 1961).

²⁰ On the importance of Demetrius and Hermogenes in 16th-century theories on style, cf. Grosser H., *La sottigliezza del disputare. Teorie degli stili e teorie dei generi in età rinascimentale e nel Tasso* (Firenze: 1992); Patterson A.M., *Hermogenes and the Renaissance. Seven Ideas of Style* (Princeton: 1970).

²¹ Longinus, *On the Sublime* IX, 2.

²² Cf. Herrick M.T., *The Fusion of Horatian and Aristotelian Literary Criticism. 1531–1555* (Urbana: 1946).

²³ Giacomini L., *Del furor poetico. Discorso fatto ne l'Accademia degli Alterati ne l'anno MDLXXXVII*, in idem, *Orationi e discorsi* (Florence, Sermartelli: 1597) 53–73. The text is edited in Weinberg B., *Trattati di poetica e retorica del Cinquecento* (Bari: 1972) III, 423–444 (quotations come from this edition). Critical bibliography on Giacomini is quite poor;

who studied classical philology with Pietro Vettori, was very interested in Greek rhetorical texts: he worked on Aristotle's *Poetics*, as well as Demetrius' *On Style*, but he also wrote commentaries on Aristophanes, Euripides and Sophocles.

Giacomini's *Discorso* aims to demonstrate the absurdity of the notion of poetic *furor* as a sort of external inspiration coming from the gods or other superior spiritual beings. If poetry were the result of such an inspiration, poets would not be responsible for their works and poetic art itself would be completely useless. This does not imply the non-existence of *furor* as a fundamental function of poetry. On the contrary, it exists, but it is not a state of mind produced by divine inspiration. In order to reject the idea of divine inspiration, Giacomini turns to the theory of humours:

The man who wishes *to rise to the heights of poetry or of eloquence* or of philosophy has need of temperate spirits, inclining rather towards the cold ones, in order to think, investigate, discourse, and judge [...]; to continue in such operations, he seeks an abundance of humors neither weak nor easily dissipated, but stable and firm, which move through *vigourous and powerful imaginations*; but in order to execute well in conformity with *the idea conceived within himself*, he needs warmth so that the expression may be effective.²⁴

Giacomini's idea of poetic inspiration perfectly fits in with the traditional profile of the poet (or, more generically speaking, of the artist) as a melancholic person.²⁵ Thanks to the theory of humours, Giacomini finally comes

lacking of a broad study concerning the different aspects of his cultural profile, cf. at least some useful suggestions in Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 322–324, 523–527; and Siekiera A., “Lorenzo Giacomini Tebalducci Malespini”, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 54 (Rome: 2000) 181–183.

²⁴ ‘L'uomo che a l'altezza de la poesia o de l'eloquenza o de la filosofia dee salire, per pensare, investigare, discorrere e giudicare, ha bisogno di spiriti temperati che inclinino nel freddo [...] Per continuare in queste operazioni, ricerca copia di spiriti non deboli né facili a risolversi, ma stabili e fermi che muovon con vigorosi e potenti fantasmi. Ma per bene eseguire secondo l'idea in sé concepita, ha bisogno di calore, acciò che con efficacia esprima’ (Giacomini, *Discorso*, 430; English translations of some passages of Giacomini's lecture are provided by Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism* 323).

²⁵ An explicit reference to the aristotelian theory of humours arrives a few lines later, where Giacomini skilfully explains in which sense melancholic temperament is the most suitable for poetry (Giacomini, *Discorso*, 430: ‘E di qui è manifesto la melancolia da Aristotele lodata non esser quella parte più impura degli umori che è fredda, secca, grave, grossa et oscura, contraria a l'operazione de l'intelletto; ma essere la melancolia fatta per abbruciamento de l'umore collerico, la quale è calda ma pur men calda de la collera; è pura, sottile, e lucida, perciò accomodata a l'atto de l'intendere molto più de la flemma, la quale di lentezza d'ingegno e di caducità di memoria suole esser cagione più che la collera, che non ha fermezza né sofferenza di perseverare negli studi; più che l'umor sanguigno, il

to a fascinating paradox: aiming to demonstrate that natural talent for poetry is not helpful if devoid of an excellent knowledge of poetic technique, he finally conceives artistic creation as a natural process involving a difficult balance of different humours. Going into raptures ('Estasi, rapimento, furore, smania') is thus the effect produced by warm spirits, as well as the essential condition of poetic creation. When affected by that state of mind, the soul, 'fixed and intent upon an operation, forgets every other object, and does not even remember itself or what it is doing'.²⁶

As remarked by Bernard Weinberg, 'the mechanism of poetry is thus essentially a natural one for Giacomini. He explains the power that art has over its listeners or spectators not by an appeal to supernatural intervention but by two natural causes': sympathy ('that movement of the soul by which men identify themselves with the passions of others') and delight ('which comes to men, through their senses, from imitation').²⁷ In order to stir sympathy and delight, the poet has to master some principles which are the basis of his art. That is why, according to Giacomini's interpretation, even if artistic creation consists of a natural process and is based on physiological dynamics, Art plays a more important role than Nature in the elaboration of a masterwork. This means that, even though a natural aptitude for poetry is important, poets must primarily acquire an excellent knowledge of rhetorical and poetic technique aimed at exploiting and expressing the extraordinary potential of the poetic imagination.

Giacomini's treatment of *furore* and *estasi* implies a broadened discussion of *fantasia*, which is the actual keyword in the different notions we are dealing with. 'Vigorous and powerful imaginations' representing 'the idea conceived within himself' by the artist are the true constituent elements of poetry. Giacomini insists on the power of poetic imagination, explaining that fixing upon an idea with a strong concentration lets the poet actually see what he is thinking about. Moreover, inserting an underlying

quale distrae la mente e l'inchina a' giochi et agli amori et a' dilette degli oggetti de' sensi'). Cf. the classic studies by Wittkower R., *Born under Saturn. The Character and Conduct of Artists: a Documented History from Antiquity to French Revolution* (London: 1963); and Klibansky R. – Panofsky E. – Saxl F., *Saturn and Melancholy. Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (London: 1964).

²⁶ Giacomini, *Discorso*, 431. Cf. the entire passage, in which the author also briefly describes *estasi*, *rapimento*, *furore* and *smania*: 'E perché l'anima ha una semplice essenza, benché con tanti nomi venga appellata, egli avviene che affisata et intenta ad una operazione di ogni altro oggetto si scorda, né pure si ricorda di se stessa né quello che faccia. Laonde è detta allora patire estasi, cioè star fuori di sé, rapimento quasi che l'oggetto la rapisca, furore e smania perché ardentemente e furiosamente opera senza discorso'.

²⁷ Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism* 324.

reference to the problem of artistic representation of non-existent objects, he specifies that such mental images can represent something whether it is real or not.²⁸ Anyway, the author's main concern is the fundamental relation between imagination and the state of mental alteration usually known as *furor*, which is definitely conceived as 'affisamento de l'anima de l'idea' (that is, the total concentration on a particular idea pictured in one's mind). According to Giacomini, such a notion of *furor* implies a process of mental visualisation, that recalls the rhetorical category of *enargeia*: 'it is clear that poet's *furor* occurs when the poet himself strongly figures things as if they were present'.²⁹

Following Aristotle and Horace, Giacomini maintains that poets must feel the passions they want to make the audience feel.³⁰ Sharing a rhetorical frame which is typical of late 16th century *poetica degli affetti*, the Florentine academician favours the dimension of emotional involvement and emphasises the relation between strong emotions and noble concepts: noble, high and marvellous concepts ('concetti nobili, alti e maravigliosi'), as Giacomini says, give rise to an excellent poem, when supported by natural *furor*. A truly experienced emotion lets the poet devise and express concepts which touch the audience by virtue of sympathy. Furthermore, a strong imagination will let the poet re-experience such emotions and express them anew.³¹ The role of imagination in such a process is once again pointed out. It is clear that, according to Giacomini, poetry does not aim to persuade listeners by appealing to reason. As such, one of the most relevant of poetic means is *enargeia*, or rather, the ability to convey poetic images as if they were vividly present, indeed alive to their audience. Thus, readers or listeners will be seized, touched and captivated by the poet.

²⁸ Giacomini recalls the example of angels, explaining that there is no difference between a mental image representing an object we previously observed in reality, and the image of something we just pictured in our mind. Cf. Giacomini, *Discorso* 431: 'se alcuno gagliardamente imaginerà angeli, cioè giovani bellissimi vestiti di luce e di splendore, e dimorerà fisso in questo pensiero, intanto inforzerà quell'immagine negli spiriti che la condurrà sino a l'occhio, e sarà tanto quanto se miracolosamente gli vedesse; perché differenza non fa che l'immagine partendo dagli oggetti esteriori a l'occhio pervenga, o che partendo dal di dentro pure a l'occhio arrivi'.

²⁹ Giacomini, *Discorso* 433: 'ben si conosce questo furore nel poeta [...] aver luogo in quanto fisamente imaginano esser presenti a le azioni raccontate'.

³⁰ Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* XVII 1455a 31–34; Horace, *Art of Poetry* 101–102: 'si vis me flere, dolendum est / primum ipsi tibi'.

³¹ Giacomini, *Discorso* 438: 'si come il vero affetto fa trovare et esprimere concetti atti a commovere per la virtù de la simpatia gli animi altrui, così la fissa immaginazione costituirà il poeta in affetto, e farà che operi non fingendo e con freddezza, ma quasi di cuore'.

At the end of his lecture, and in accordance with the priority he grants to Art, Lorenzo Giacomini offers some suggestions concerning the way poets can improve their poetic ability; he cites Longinus as a great master of nobility of discourse, who provides some precepts on how to acquire grandeur of spirit and raise the soul towards noble concepts.³² What Giacomini explicitly derives from Longinus is the importance of following great poets of the past and writing as if they were our judges.³³ There are nonetheless other Longinian traces in his lecture. A relevant one, though quite general, consists of focusing, at the very end of his argument, on the notions of poetic excellence and sublimity in terms which recall Longinus' words. Some ideas more precisely derived from the Greek rhetorician appear elsewhere in the text. Discussing the emotional involvement of the poet in what he is writing about, Giacomini not only mentions Ovid and Archilocus, but he also refers to Cicero and Demosthenes. Even though he does not recall the Longinian comparison between the two orators, for he places them on the same plane, Giacomini turns to the famous images of thunder and lightning, which – according to Longinus – perfectly describe both the style and the moral vividness of the Greek orator.³⁴ Another Longinian trace may be found in the reference to Orestes seeing the Erinyes: the example of the Greek hero allows the academician to explain that a poet who wants to produce wonder ('maraviglia') must himself engage with the affections ('affetti') he wants to express.³⁵ Giacomini seems to refer to Longinus even when discussing the relation between age and the poets' grandeur: the comparison between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*,

³² Giacomini, *Discorso* 442: 'Alcuni precetti ne diede Dionisio Longino, gran maestro de l'altezza del dire, per acquistare spirito di grandezza e per innalzare l'animo a nobili concetti'.

³³ Giacomini, *Discorso* 442–443: 'Uno è che venendo in ammirazione di quegli uomini famosi che altamente poetarono, diciamo a noi stessi: "Come direbbe questo Omero, come Pindaro, come Sofocle?"; perché quasi trasformandoci in essi de lo spirito loro ci venghiamo ad informare. L'altro è che imaginandoci questi eroi presenti, incitiamo noi stessi a far sì che a loro possiamo piacere'.

³⁴ Giacomini, *Discorso* 438: 'Marco Tullio contra Catilina massimamente presente, o contro Marco Antonio suo acerbo nemico, e Demostene per Ctesifonte contra Eschine per la forza del proprio affetto, con maggior forza di tuoni e di fulmini si fanno sentire'. Cf. Longinus, *On the Sublime* XII, 4.

³⁵ Giacomini, *Discorso* 439: 'Però chiunque brama operare cosa degna di quella maraviglia che dal poeta si aspetta, trasformisi negli affetti che esprimere intende, o sian le furie di Oreste o la disperazione di Elettra o l'ira di Achille o l'alterezza di Agamennone; e riempia l'animo di concetti tali'. Cf. Longinus, *On the Sublime* XV, 2 and 9.

focusing on the fading of passions in the latter case, is in fact a sort of summary of Longinus' remarks on the Homeric epic poems.³⁶

Nevertheless, Lorenzo Giacomini adheres more to the notion of poetic imagination in Longinus. Even while rethinking its dynamics in terms of natural physiology, he dwells on that fundamental notion, emphasising the relation between *phantasia* and *enargeia*. The humanist does not mention the second term, but in discussing the first (as well as its synonym *immaginazione*) he pays special attention to its actual effect, which is the vivid representation of poetic images by means of verbal discourse.³⁷ The accompanying example actually fits in with Longinian poetic imagery, and it is emblematic of an idea of literature which favours the striking version of *meraviglia* as a primary component: in order to describe a frightening tempest or a bloody and formidable battle, it is useful to have actually experienced such events. Hearing about them is in fact not enough, for only a direct knowledge of fearful things allows us to imagine and picture them forcefully.³⁸

Poetic imagination and the Longinian notion of phantasia

When Lorenzo Giacomini refers to 'fantasmi gagliardi', 'vigorosi e potenti fantasmi', as well as to 'imagine', 'immaginazione' and 'fantasia', he is dealing with notions which play a very important role in Longinus' treatise *On the Sublime*. According to the Greek rhetorician, *phantasia* figures among the *aretai* ("virtues") of speech and functions as a complement to the two primary sources of the sublime (*megalophrosyne*, "magnanimity", and *pathos*, "passion"). He discusses such a notion at length in chapter XV:

Another thing which is very productive of grandeur, magnificence and urgency, my young friend, is *visualisation* (*phantasia*). I use this word for what some people call *image-production* (*eidolopoia*). The term *phantasia* is

³⁶ Giacomini, *Discorso* 442: 'maggior altezza troverai ne l'Iliade che ne l'Odissea, parto de l'età inchinante a la vecchiezza'. Cf. Longinus, *On the Sublime* IX, 11–14.

³⁷ Cf. Giacomini, *Discorso* 442, where – according to Aristotle – *enargeia* and the representation of emotions are considered as the main components of poetical discourse ('quando l'animo a poetar si dispone, colmisi di concetti nobili, alti e maravigliosi, et infiammisi di quel furore di cui di sopra parlammo. Al che conferirà lo insegnamento datone da Aristotele, lo immaginarsi quanto è più possibile, lo avere le cose presenti e ritrovarsi ne l'affetto da esprimersi').

³⁸ Giacomini, *Discorso* 442: 'Al bene descrivere spaventosa tempesta di mare o sanguinosa e fiera battaglia marittima o terrestre, gioverebbe l'essere stato presente et avere miglior prova che di udito. Ma da cose simili potrai formare immaginazione e ritratto efficace').

used generally for anything which in any way suggests a thought productive of speech (*ennoema gennetikon logou*); but the word has also come into fashion for the situation in which enthusiasm and emotion make the speaker see what he is saying and *bring it visually before his audience* (*yp'opsin tithes tois akouousin*).³⁹

The meaning of *phantasia* in Longinus is at once simple and complex: as the usage of *eidolopoiia* confirms, the word means in this context "image".⁴⁰ Nevertheless, *phantasia* is also the process involved in the production of mental images as Aristotle defines it in *De anima* III, 3, 427a 15–429a 9.⁴¹ Longinus explicitly connects the term to the ability to bring what the poet is saying before the listeners. For this particular construal of the word, Russell suggests that it be translated into "visualisation".⁴²

In order to understand how Renaissance scholars conceived the Longinian notion of *phantasia*, the modern reader has briefly to forget the romantic and post-romantic implications of the term, and instead try to place its meaning in the original context. First editions and commentaries may help us compensate for the lack of a full explanation in Longinus.

In chapter XV, for instance, it is interesting to remark that Pietro Pagano (1572), translating *phantasiai* into 'cogitata ac mentis sensa', favours the intellectual side of the imaginative process. Otherwise, he makes the iconic side come to light when he translates the term *eidolopoiiai* into

³⁹ Longinus, *On the Sublime* XV, 1–2.

⁴⁰ According to Plato, *eidolopoiia* means image-making as in mirrors (*Timaeus* 46a), but also the reproduction of painted images (*Crit.* 107b). As Martano remarks, the word *eidolopoiia* gradually meant 'fantastic imagination', that is, image-making started by productive *phantasia*, and not by the simple storing of real objects images. Cf. Martano G., "Introduzione", in Longinus, *Del sublime* (Bari: 1965) 34 n.122. In confirmation of this interpretation of the term, cf. Quintilian, *Inst. or.* VI, 2, 29; Iamblicus, *De Myster.* 2–10, 3–28.

⁴¹ As regards the notion of *phantasia* from Plato to Plotinus, cf. Fattori M., "Phantasia vel imaginatio?" and Camassa G., "Phantasia da Platone ai Neoplatonici", both in Fattori M. – Bianchi M. (eds.), *Phantasia – Imaginatio* (Roma: 1988) xi–xxx, 23–55; more recently cf. Follon J., "La notion de *phantasia* chez Platon", Labarrière J.-L., "Nature et fonction de la *phantasia* chez Aristote", Lefebvre R., "La crise de la *phantasia*: originalité des interprétations, originalité d'Aristote", in Lories D. – Rizziero L. (eds.), *De la phantasia à l'imagination* (Louvain: 2003) 1–14, 15–30, 31–46. The complex interpretation of *phantasia* in Aristotle is addressed by Linguisti A., "Immagine e concetto in Aristotele e Plotino", in Cristante L. (ed.), *Phantasia. Il pensiero per immagini degli antichi e dei moderni* (Trieste: 2005). See also the excellent work by Manieri A., *L'immagine poetica nella teoria degli antichi. Phantasia ed enargeia* (Pisa: 1998). Useful remarks concerning Longinus in Watson G., *Phantasia in Classical Thought* (Galway: 1988) 66–68.

⁴² Russell D.A. (ed.), Longinus *On the Sublime* (Oxford: 1964) 120: 'Visualisation, though an ugly word, is preferable as a translation to "fantasy", "vision", or "imagination" – all of which have too many associations'.

‘*imaginationum repraesentationes*’.⁴³ Gabriele De Petra (1612), who more cautiously shies away from translating into Latin the Greek word *phantasiai*, provides a more illuminating circumlocution for *eidolopoiiai*: ‘interiores formarum fictiones et repraesentationes’,⁴⁴ which seems to focus on the various implications of the term. Besides, probably conscious of the ambiguity of the passage, De Petra himself suggests a comparison to Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* VI, 2, where the Latin master, after saying that the speaker has first to feel himself the passions he wants to represent, shows what could help the speaker in seducing his listeners:

The person who will show the greatest power in the expression of emotions will be the person who has properly formed what the Greeks call *phantasiai* (let us call them “visions”), by which the images of absent things are presented to the mind in such a way that we seem actually to see them with our eyes and have them physically present to us. Some use the word *euphantasiotos* of one who is exceptionally good at realistically imagining to himself things, words, and actions.⁴⁵

The result of a sharp use of imagination is thus *enargeia*:

The result will be *enargeia*, what Cicero calls *illustratio* and *evidentia*, a quality which makes us seem not so much to be talking about something as exhibiting it. Emotions will ensue just as if we were present at the event itself.⁴⁶

As we have already seen, the notion of *enargeia* is fundamental in Longinus too. His major source is of course Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, where the philosopher deals with *pro ommaton*.⁴⁷ The topic is introduced by Longinus in the second paragraph of chapter XV, when he has to define the difference between the rhetorical *phantasia* and the poetic one:

⁴³ Dionysii Longini *De Sublimi dicendi genere liber a Petro Pagano latinitate donatus*, f. 18r.

⁴⁴ Dionysii Longini *Rhetori praestantissimi liber de Grandi, sive Sublimi genere Orationi, Latine reductus* [...] a Gabriele de Petra (Geneva, Johannes Tornaesius, 1612) 78.

⁴⁵ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* VI, 2, 29–30 (transl. Russell); cf. the latin text: ‘Quas *phantasiai* Graeci vocant (nos sane visiones appellemus), per quas imagines rerum absentium ita repraesentantur animo ut eas cernere oculis ac praesentes habere videamur, has quisquis bene ceperit is erit in adfectibus potentissimus. Quidam dicunt *euphantasiotaton* qui sibi res voces actus secundum verum optime fingit’.

⁴⁶ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* VI, 2, 32; cf. the latin text: ‘Insequetur *enargeia*, quae a Cicerone *illustratio* et *evidentia* nominatur, quae non tam dicere videtur quam ostendere, et affectus non aliter quam si rebus ipsis intersimus sequentur’.

⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* III, 1411b 24–1412a 10.

It will not escape you that rhetorical visualisation has a different intention from that of the poets: in poetry the aim is astonishment (*ekplexis*), in oratory it is clarity (*enargeia*). Both, however, seek emotion (*pathetikon*) and excitement (*sygkekimenenon*).⁴⁸

The distinction between *ekplexis* and *enargeia* does not mean, as modern scholars have shown, that poetry has nothing to do with *enargeia* or vice versa. Moreover, the following remarks concerning emotion and excitement, reveal that both poetry and oratory deal with a sort of irrational involvement of the audience.

It is therefore interesting to look at early Latin translations of the term *ekplexis*, for such a detail lets us detect changes in taste during late Renaissance. In Orsini's manuscript we find the simple 'stupor',⁴⁹ while Pietro Pagano, some years later, prefers to particularize the term, translating *ekplexis* into 'admiratio et stupor'.⁵⁰ Pagano's choice aims at focusing on the dimension of *meraviglia*, revealing an approach which will be taken in and deepened by early 17th century readers: Gabriele De Petra, for instance, translates *ekplexis* as 'terror et consternatio',⁵¹ two emotions that recall the effects produced by Lorenzo Giacomini's frightening tempests and bloody battles.

Evidence suggestive of this kind of approach is offered by Francesco Porto's commentary, which remained unpublished until Zacharias Pearce edited it in 1733.⁵² Commenting on chapter XV, he explains that whereas in oratory *phantasia* aims at 'orationem illustrare' (that is, a clear circumlocution for *evidentia*), in poetry it aims to upset human souls ('percellere animos').⁵³ An important corollary of this affirmation concerns the different nature of rhetorical and poetic *phantasiai*: in order to persuade, oratory must have recourse to probable and likely images ('probabiles'); in

⁴⁸ Longinus, *On the Sublime* XV, 2. A separate paper would be needed sufficiently to illustrate the difference between *enargeia* and *energeia*. For the moment, just see the treatment of this complex topic in Manieri A., *L'immagine poetica* 97–105. Cf. also Kemmann A., "Evidentia, Evidenz", in Ueding G. (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* (Tübingen: 1998) IV, 33–47.

⁴⁹ *Dionysii Longini De altitudine et granditate orationis*, ms. Vat. Lat. 3441, f. 18v.

⁵⁰ *Dionysii Longini De Sublimi dicendi genere liber a Petro Pagano latinitate donatus*, f. 18r.

⁵¹ *Dionysii Longini Rhetori praestantissimi liber de Grandi, sive Sublimi genere orationi, Latine reditus [...]* a Gabriele de Petra, 78.

⁵² Porto F., "In Longinum commentarius integer", in Pearce Z. (ed.), *Dionysii Longini de Sublimitate commentarius* (Amsterdam: 1733) 279–360.

⁵³ Porto, "In Longinum" 315.

contrast, poetry, which seeks emotional involvement, deals with fabulous images ('fabulosae').⁵⁴

Early translators and commentators thus show an approach to the Longinian notion of *phantasia*, which perfectly fits in with late 16th century taste for astonishment produced by wonder. In such a context, Renaissance rhetoricians could find similar statements in other Greek texts. Among them, Demetrius' *On Style* and Hermogenes' *On Types of Style* offer a large amount of fundamental remarks. Just to give an example, I suggest focusing on what Demetrius says about the use of allegory in the section of his treatise devoted to the magnificent style. After stressing the importance of the so-called "active metaphor" that is based on *enargeia*,⁵⁵ he explains that

any darkly-hinting expression (*to yponooumenon*) is more terror-striking, and its import is variously conjectured by different hearers. On the other hand, things that are clear and plain are apt to be despised, just like men when stripped of their garments. Hence the Mysteries are revealed in an allegorical form (*en allegorais legetai*) in order to inspire such shuddering and awe (*pros ekplexin kai phriken*) as are associated with darkness and night. Allegory also is not unlike darkness and night.⁵⁶

The notions Demetrius is dealing with are the same that we find in Longinus: most interesting is that *ekplexis* is here explicitly connected to allegory, which is mentioned as a code for interpreting poetic images in chapter IX of Longinus' treatise as well. Discussing those high concepts which make a sublime poem, the rhetorician dwells on frightening images, explaining that they need to be interpreted allegorically.⁵⁷ Otherwise, it would be difficult to accept them because they do not respect conventions.⁵⁸

The topic is controversial, for it deals with the problematic notion of poets' freedom. Still in chapter XV, the author clearly explains that human nature is very sensitive to external influences that appeal to emotions. Looking at the implications of Aristotelian *opsis*,⁵⁹ Longinus extends them to *phantasia*:

⁵⁴ Porto, "In Longinum" 318.

⁵⁵ Demetrius, *On Style* II, 81: 'In Aristotle's judgment the so-called "active" metaphor is the best, wherein inanimate things are introduced in a state of activity as though they were animate' (transl. Rhys Roberts).

⁵⁶ Demetrius, *On Style* II, 100–101.

⁵⁷ Longinus, *On the Sublime* IX, 6.

⁵⁸ Longinus, *On the Sublime* IX, 7. I will quote this passage later.

⁵⁹ Aristotle, *Poetics* VI 1450b 16–20; XXIV 1460a 12 ff.

Now our natural instinct is, in all such cases, to attend to the stronger influence, so that we are diverted from the demonstration (*apo tou apodeiktikou*) to the astonishment caused by the visualization (*eis to kata phantasian ekplektikon*), which by its very brilliance conceals the factual aspect. This is a natural reaction: when two things are joined together, the stronger attracts to itself the force of the weaker.⁶⁰

Knowing that men are struck by strong feelings, Longinus confirms that image-production aims at the emotional involvement of the audience (*to kata phantasian ekplektikon*: where *phantasia* and *ekplexis* are again explicitly connected).⁶¹

Final remarks

Using Jean Starobinski's brilliant observations on the history of the idea of imagination, we can say that one of the major achievements of Longinus is the strong delimitation of a human field – that of literature – which of course has a relationship to the real world, but deals at the same time with an independent communication code. Literature has the power to create many other realities in which the only generation principle is *logos*.⁶²

Relevant here is the way Longinus thinks about the process of poetic imagination and, in consequence, about *mimesis*. As Starobinski notes, *mimesis* is unable to bypass imagination, and we might add that in the Latin etymological tradition the words *imitatio* and *imaginatio* are related.⁶³ We could instead ask ourselves whether it is possible for imagination

⁶⁰ Longinus, *On the sublime* XV, 11.

⁶¹ Among other passages concerning the rhetorical means to be employed by the poet in order to make visible what he is talking about, cf. Longinus, *On the Sublime* XXVI, 1–2, devoted to the *prosoyon antimethatesis*: 'Urgency may also be conveyed by the replacement of one grammatical person by another. It often gives the hearer the sense of being in the midst of the danger himself. [...] Do you see, my friend, how he grips your mind and takes it on tour through all these places, making hearing as good as seeing? All such forms of expression, being directed to an actual person, bring the hearer into the presence of real events'.

⁶² Starobinski J., "Jalons pour une histoire du concept d'imagination", in idem, *L'oeil vivant II. La relation critique* (Paris: 1970) 174–195.

⁶³ Among the many examples, cf. at least Cecchini E. – Arbizzoni G. (eds.), Uguccione da Pisa, *Derivationes* (Florence: 2004) 606–607: '*Imitor* -aris, idest sequi; unde *imitator* et *imitatorius* -a -um, dignus imitatione vel qui imitatur aliquem; et hec *imago* -nis, representatio alicuius rei, et dicitur imago quasi imitatio, quia imitatur rem cuius est in corporalibus liniamentis et dispositione partium: aliter non proprie dicitur imago. Unde *imaginarius* -a -um, quod pertinet ad imaginem vel quod percipitur umbratiler et quadam imaginatione; et *imaginor* -aris, rem absentem percipere vel imaginem rei absentis; unde hec *imaginatio*, scilicet vis anime qua qui comprehendit formas cum materia, re absente; sed hec aut est

to bypass *mimesis*. The answer, quite easy in light of the Romantic turn, is obviously “yes, it is”, but things were different in the 16th century and above all during the second half of the century, when Ariosto’s marvellous poetic creations and Michelangelo’s revolutionary paintings were often under accusation because of their lack of verisimilitude.

Longinus, as well as Demetrius, offers 16th century readers interesting suggestions about the power of poetic word. As he maintains in chapter XV, 8, poetry is the kingdom of marvellous and incredible things, and this is possible because of the suggestive power of words.⁶⁴ As Aristotle said, what we see has a strong effect on us (cf. the notion of *opsis* mentioned before), but this power decreases if what we actually see is not probable. Poetry, however, is able to make visible through words what we might often refuse in actuality. Figurative arts, to be appreciated and accepted, have to deal with the imitation of real things, and the pleasure we gain is proportional to the degree of resemblance the artist achieves.⁶⁵ This means that figurative arts, as they are *technai*, require a high competence in material execution; on the contrary, when poetry aims at the sublime, it is just concerned with nature. *Logos*, as Longinus says, is natural, and this seems to imply that sublime poetry actually bypasses the usual mimetic process:

It has been remarked that the failed Colossus is no better than the Doryphorus of Polyclitus. There are many ways of answering this. We may say that accuracy (*to akribestaton*) is admired in art, and grandeur (*to megethos*) in nature, and it is *by nature* that man is endowed with the power of speech (*to logikon*); or again that statues are expected to represent the human form, whereas, as I said, something higher than human is sought in literature. At this point I have a suggestion to make which takes us back to the beginning of the book. Impeccability is generally a product of art; erratic excellence

recordationis aut imitationis aut confectionis: recordationis cum eandem rem imaginamur quae prius subiecta fuit nostro sensui; imitationis, rem similem, non eandem’.

⁶⁴ Longinus, *On the Sublime* XV, 8: ‘The poetical examples, as I said, have a quality of exaggeration which belongs to fable and goes far beyond credibility. In an orator’s visualisations, on the other hand, it is the element of fact and truth which makes for success; when the content of the passage is poetical and fabulous and does not shrink from any impossibility, the result is a shocking and outrageous abnormality. This is what happens with the shock orators of our own day; like tragic actors, these fine fellows *see* the Erinyes, and are incapable of understanding that when Orestes says “Let me go; you are one of my Erinyes, / You are hugging me tight, to throw me into Hell” (Euripides, *Orestes* 264–265), he visualises all this because he is mad’.

⁶⁵ Cf. the distinction between tragedy and epic poetry in Aristotle, *Poetics* XXIV 1460a 12 ff.

comes from natural greatness; therefore, art must always come to the aid of nature, and the combination of the two may well be perfection.⁶⁶

Sublimity does not necessarily coincide with perfection, which consists in the ideal combination of art (which helps us in avoiding faults) and nature (which is the main source of sublime). In the meantime, Longinus reveals the wonderful power of *to logikon*, comparing it to figurative arts: while statues are expected to have human form (that is, more generally, to reproduce reality), sublime literature looks for something higher than realistic imitation.

The opposition between *phantasia* and *mimesis* thus comes to light, recalling the famous passage from Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* on the power of imagination,⁶⁷ as well as the Platonic distinction between the art of making likenesses (*mimesis eikastike*), and the art of making appearances (*mimesis phantastike*),⁶⁸ which played a fundamental role in late Renaissance debates on poetry. Nonetheless, 16th century readers of Longinus could hardly embrace such a 'modern' idea of literature, for the classical notion of *imitatio* imposed by scholastic readings of Aristotle, Cicero and Horace maintained a strong primacy over other kinds of approach to literary imagination.

With regards to this trend, considerable evidence is offered by Pietro Vettori's commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics*: explaining a passage devoted to incredible subjects in poetry, Vettori appeals to Longinus' remarks on allegory in order to legitimise poetic licence.⁶⁹ In such a context, Lorenzo

⁶⁶ Longinus, *On the Sublime* XXXVI, 3–4.

⁶⁷ Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* VI, 19: 'Imagination (*phantasia*) [is] a more skilful artist than Imitation (*sophotera mimeseos demiourgos*). Imitation (*mimesis*) will create what it knows, but Imagination will also create what it does not know, conceiving it with reference to the real. Shock (*ekplexis*) often frustrates Imitation, but nothing will frustrate Imagination, as it goes imperturbably towards its own appointed purpose'. As regards the notion of *mimesis* in Philostratus also cf. *Life of Apollonius* II, 22. For a plain discussion of these passages, cf. Manieri A., *L'immagine poetica* 60–67.

⁶⁸ Plato, *Soph.* 235d–236c.

⁶⁹ Vettori P., *Commentarii in primum librum Aristotelis de arte poetarum* (Florence, Bernardo Giunta: 1560) 295. Vettori visibly refers to Longinus, *On the Sublime* IX, 7: 'terrifying as all this is, it is blasphemous and indecent unless it is interpreted allegorically'. A very similar approach is to be found in late 16th century readers of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (who legitimated the poet's fancies, interpreting them allegorically), as well as in the debates on Michelangelo's "unrealistic" paintings. As regards the latter, cf. the dialogue by Comanini G., "Il Figino, overo del fine della pittura" (1591), in Barocchi P. (ed.), *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra Manierismo e Controriforma* III (Bari: 1962) 237–379, where the author appeals to allegorical interpretation in order to justify Michelangelo's licences (351–352).

Giacomini's *Discorso del furor poetico*, which is one of the very few rhetorical treatises of the Italian Renaissance that explicitly quotes Longinus, focuses on the role of poetic imagination. Differently from his colleague and correspondent Francesco Patrizi, who pointed out the connection between *fantasia* and *meraviglia* to be discerned from chapter XV of the treatise *On the Sublime*,⁷⁰ Giacomini does not appeal to the Greek rhetorician in order to support the idea of the poet as a wise prophet endowed with supernatural inspiration. Placing imagination in its natural and physiological ground, as well as refusing the idea of supernatural interventions in poetic inspiration, Giacomini unveils a reading of Longinus which tends to emphasise the human dynamics of literary writing from the point of view of both the poet and the audience.

⁷⁰ Patrizi stands out among Renaissance interpreters of Longinus by virtue of his attentive reading of the chapter devoted to *phantasia*. On the basis of two passages (*On the Sublime* XV, 2 and 9), he emphasizes the connection between imagination and astonishment, as well as the power of *meraviglia* in order to touch and strike the audience. Cf. Vasoli, "Schede patriziane" 167–169.

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THE SUBLIME AND THE BIBLE:
LONGINUS, PROTESTANT DOGMATICS,
AND THE “SUBLIME STYLE”

Dietmar Till¹

I

Longinus's short treatise, once called a “small golden book” by the famous French philologist Isaac Casaubon,² was transmitted only fragmentarily. It had a greater influence on aesthetics than any other theoretical text during the early modern period. Since the first edition of the Greek text (by Francesco Robortello in 1554), the treatise had been understood as a scholarly piece on the grand style, clearly situated within the context of the theory of the rhetorical *genera dicendi*, the three canons of style.³ The potential of *Peri hypsos* to break these norms was not discovered until the end of the 17th century. Nicolas Boileau's French translation, published in 1674 together with his influential *Art poétique*, played a decisive role in this process.⁴ He was among the first to recognize that Longinus's category of *hypsos* was not identical to the grand style of the three *genera dicendi*, which is also mirrored in the title he gave his translation: *Traité du sublime* (previous editions had always referred to the grand style in their titles).

While Boileau's predecessors had most frequently translated the Greek word *hypsos* with reference to the rhetorical *genus grande*, Boileau used the Latin word *sublimitas*. This was still a relatively fresh term and not frequently used in Latin rhetorical terminology. In the preface to his translation, Boileau describes the effect of the sublime *hypsos* as ‘not a style, and

¹ I would like to thank Simone Han (Tübingen) for her assistance in translating this text into English.

² Till D., *Das doppelte Erhabene. Eine Argumentationsfigur von der Antike bis zum Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: 2006) 24; cf. Brody J., Boileau and Longinus (Genève: 1958) p. 9 sq.

³ Till, *Das doppelte Erhabene*, 27–40.

⁴ Boileau N., *Dissertation sur la Joconde, Arrest Burlesque, Traité du sublime* (Œuvres complètes, vol. 4), ed. Ch.-H. Boudors (Paris: 1942) 39–124; cf. Zelle C., *Die doppelte Ästhetik der Moderne. Revisionen des Schönen von Boileau bis Nietzsche* (Stuttgart – Weimar: 1994)

by no means identical to what the ancient rhetoricians called the grand style (*le stile sublime*). The sublime should rather be understood as the extraordinary, the delightful properties of a speech that carry the audience away.⁵

In his preface Boileau thus carefully distinguishes the rhetorical 'grand style' from the sublime (*hypsos*) in Longinus's sense. For Boileau, the chief theorist of the French classical period, rhetorical grand style and the sublime were clearly opposed to each other. The grand style, he writes, always aims at the use of 'great words', but one could find the *hypsos*-sublime in one single thought or one single rhetorical figure. It is not a style in terms of a style "level" or style "register", but rather a momentary effect that appears unexpectedly and surprises the audience.⁶ Longinus himself compares *hypsos* to a lightning that, like the passion of the orator, flashes up suddenly. A matter could be sublime, he continues, with regard to the style in use (the rhetorical norms of the *genera dicendi*-theory), and still not meet the criteria of the sublime in Longinus's concept of the *hypsos*, because it has no extraordinary and surprising effect on the audience.

It is crucial for my argument that Boileau refers to a *theological* example in his discussion of *le sublime*. This is surprising for a treatise that is often considered as the origin of a modern, 'secular' aesthetics. The example is from the beginning of the *Genesis* (Gen. 1,1), where the world is created through God's speech. Boileau contrasts two stylistically different accounts of the same Act of Creation to make his point clear and show the difference between the grand style and the sublime: "The Almighty who rules over the earth creates light through one single sentence." According to Boileau, this phrase is written in grand style, but it is not sublime in the true – i.e. Longinian – sense of the word. Compare the second example: "God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."⁷ According to Boileau, this phrase is truly sublime; it is even divine. The extraordinary, the wonderful, the striking spark is fully achieved in this phrase.⁸

Boileau, of course, does not invent here a new example of *le sublime*. He quotes this passage from the Bible, but at the same time he is also citing

⁵ Boileau, *Traité du sublime* 45.

⁶ Boileau N., *Dialogues, Réflexions critiques, Œuvres diverses* (Œuvres complètes, vol. 5), ed. Ch.-H. Boudors (Paris: 1942) 184–185 (Réfl. XII).

⁷ Boileau, *Réflexions critiques*, 170 (Réfl. X): 'Dieu dit: que la lumière se fasse: et la lumière se fit.'

⁸ Boileau, *Traité du sublime* 45–46.

an example Longinus himself uses in *Peri hypsous*, the *fiat lux*.⁹ Longinus – a pagan author – thus quotes the Bible in *Peri hypsous*. This is unusual at least (if not unique) and of course this quotation alone makes Longinus an interesting case. When he discusses his five categories of the sublime, Longinus classifies the ‘fiat lux’ as a type of the sublime that originates from the sublimity of *thoughts*. The ability to have ‘sublime thoughts’ depends solely on the *physis* (Latin: *natura*) of the orator, thus on his natural disposition and not on the mastery of the rhetorical *techne* (Latin: *ars*) – like rhetorical figures, tropes or the effective *compositio*, which are Longinus’s three *techne*-based types of the sublime.¹⁰

II

Since the rediscovery of Longinus’s treatise in the 16th century his quotation of *fiat lux* has fascinated readers. But it is not only the authors of rhetorical handbooks (like the Dutch philologist Vossius) who use this instance of quotation. More significantly, even *theologians* refer to our pagan author in order to legitimate the aesthetic quality of the Bible *as a text*. The text of the Bible obviously could not maintain the stylistic norms of Ciceronianism, the argument goes, but it could fulfil aesthetic norms that are even superior to Cicero’s prose: the Longinian sublime.

The history of this process of re-evaluating the stylistic importance of the Bible is complex and I can only present a few important positions. Two ancient strands of discourse, originally independent, began to refer to one another during the early modern period: (1) The critique of rhetoric by the Church Fathers (*e.g.* Jerome), and Augustine’s doctrine of ‘low style’ (*sermo humilis*) on the one hand; (2) the stylistic discussions within Greek literary criticism, particularly in Hermogenes’ Treatise *Peri ideon* on the other. In what follows, I will summarize these models.

In her book *Sacred Rhetoric*, published in 1987, Debora Shuger emphasized that ‘Hellenistic’ literary critics like Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Ps.-Demetrius and Hermogenes have a significantly different concept of style compared to their roman colleagues.¹¹ Whereas for the so-called ‘Auctor ad Herennium’, Cicero, and Quintilian the *ornatus* – rhetorical figures

⁹ Longinus, *Peri hypsous* ix.9.

¹⁰ Longinus, *Peri hypsous* viii.1.

¹¹ Cf. Jonge C.C., *Between Grammar and Rhetoric. Dionysius of Halicarnassus on Language, Linguistics, and Literature* (Leiden: 2008).

and tropes – was a main criterion for the grand style, this changed in the Greek treatises.¹² This development is to be interpreted through a ‘literarization of rhetoric’, in the terms of George A. Kennedy, that took place after the decline of the Roman Republic:¹³ rhetoric no longer aims at oral communication, but expands into new fields like historiography, natural philosophy and theology. All of these new fields are primarily literary, rather than oral. Rhetoric is transformed from the art of speaking to a textual theory. Surprisingly, for Ps.-Demetrius and Dionysius the historian Thucydides is a representative of the sublime style, while Hermogenes names the philosopher Plato. In ‘classical’, i.e. Roman Rhetoric, historiography had belonged to the ‘*genus mediocre*’.¹⁴

It is noticeable that the term *hypsos* does not have an important position in ancient rhetorical terminology. As Donald Russell writes in his seminal commentary on *Peri hypsous*, the term *hypsos* does not appear before the second half of the first century BC; it was not used widely among rhetoricians.¹⁵ The important metaphor of elevation – the soul is uplifted by the sublime – is untypical in (Roman) rhetoric, as Josef-Hans Kühn points out in his study on ‘Hypsos. Eine Geschichte des Aufschwungsgedankens von Platon bis Poseidonios’ (1941).¹⁶ Normally, bodily metaphors are used within rhetorical handbook to describe styles. The Greek word *hadρός* for example – the *genus grande* in Latin rhetorical terminology – means “juicy”, “fat” or “strong”.¹⁷

I cannot discuss Hellenistic literary criticism – still largely a *terra incognita* – in depth here. But for my discussion of the religious or theological meaning of the sublime it is crucial that Ps.-Demetrius in his work *Peri hermeneias* – usually translated into English as ‘On style’ – and Hermogenes in his study of the seven stylistic ‘ideas’ (*Peri ideon*) both treat theology and natural philosophy as sublime. Ps.-Demetrius categorizes texts about the heavens and earth as ‘sublime’: precisely the topics where natural philosophy and theology coincide. Hermogenes discusses similar

¹² Shuger D., *Sacred Rhetoric. The Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance* (Princeton: 1991) 37–38.

¹³ Kennedy G.A., *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: 1994) 201.

¹⁴ Till, *Das doppelte Erhabene*, 68–71.

¹⁵ Longinus, *On the Sublime*, ed. with Introduction and Commentary by D.A. Russell (Oxford 1970) xxxi, cf. Grube, G.M.A., “Notes on the *peri hypsous*”, *American Journal of Philology* 78 (1957) 355–374.

¹⁶ Kühn, J., *HYPPOSOS. Eine Untersuchung zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des Aufschwungsgedankens von Plato bis Poseidonios* (Stuttgart: 1941).

¹⁷ Till, *Das doppelte Erhabene*, 48–56; cf. Quadlbauer F., “Die genera dicendi bis Plinius d.J.”, *Wiener Studien* 71 (1958) 55–111.

subjects under the Greek term *semnotes*, 'grave' and 'sublime' dignity. Hermogenes even delivers a whole catalogue of dignified things: thoughts and speeches about gods are *semnós*, then divine matters in general, after that human matters of particular importance, such as ethical or philosophical ideas like 'justice', 'wisdom' or 'soul'; finally thoughts about human affairs like the famous sea battle of Salamis, the piercing through the mountain Athos and so on.¹⁸ It is remarkable that there are obvious overlaps between the sublimity of the *semnotes*-category, and the stylistic quality of 'simplicity' (*apheleia*). For Hermogenes, for example, Plato is *both* sublime *and* simple. This is a combination of stylistic criteria that would not have been possible in roman rhetoric.

This overlap of simplicity and sublimity would become a central aspect in the process of the 'Christianization of rhetoric' with regard to the Biblical style. George Kustas points out in his important book on Byzantine rhetoric (1974) that the words of God are conceived as sublime (*semnós*) and simple at the same time in Greek and Byzantine rhetorical treatises.¹⁹ This combination implies – just as for Longinus – both ethical and aesthetic components, because simplicity is associated with 'truth'. As Kustas demonstrates using Byzantine commentaries, *semnótes* is a category that could be used to interpret the Biblical *fiat lux* within the framework (literary norms) of *pagan* aesthetics. Even John of Sicily in his commentary to *Peri ideon* subsumes the *fiat lux*-quotation under the category of *semnótes* and explicitly states that pagan authors admired the sublimity of the *fiat lux*.²⁰

Longin's *hypsos* was understood in a similar way during the early modern period. It was interpreted as the rhetorical *genus grande*, but was also associated with the context of the Hermogenian theory of ideas. *Hypsos* was categorized among the seven ideas; philologists like Alsted, Caussin, or Keckermann assume that *semnotés* and *hypsos* basically mean the same thing. Since George of Trebizond had delivered the Hermogenian theory of ideas to the west (in his *Rhetoricorum libri V*; first printing 1472/73), something like an ongoing competition between the ('Hermogenian') theory of ideas and the ('Ciceronian') *genera dicendi*-tradition had arisen. In the encyclopedic rhetorical handbooks, the Hermogenian concept of

¹⁸ Cf. Hagedorn D., *Zur Ideenlehre des Hermogenes* (Göttingen: 1964) 30–32; Rutherford I., *Canons of Style in the Antonine Age. Idea-Theory in its Literary Context* (Oxford: 1998); Till, *Das doppelte Erhabene*, 78–81.

¹⁹ Kustas, G.L., *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric* (Thessaloniki: 1974) 36–39.

²⁰ Kustas, *Studies*, 38–39.

stylistic ideas dominated, whereas schoolbooks normally only treated the *genera dicendi*.²¹

The Hermogenian 'system of ideas' was – at least in the 16th and early 17th centuries – a widely used stylistic system, appearing, for example, in the rhetorical works of the Dutch Gerhard Johannes Vossius, the comprehensive rhetorical handbook by Caussin, or the encyclopedic works of Johann Heinrich Alsted. Often we have a combination of both Hermogenian and (so-called) 'Ciceronian' stylistic typologies, as in Alsted's *Encyclopaedia* (1630).²² In general, the – roman – doctrine of the *genera dicendi* was more used in schoolbooks that aimed at uninformed students, whereas the Hermogenian system addresses the more sophisticated audience of erudite professors. All in all, the stylistic combination of 'sublimity' and 'simplicity' was conceivable in the Hellenistic tradition; within the roman tradition of the three *genera dicendi* it was harder to legitimize.

A similar problem occurs in the patristic tradition, namely the defence of the text of the Bible. Of course, everyone who underwent rhetorical training in late antiquity (like Jerome) could see that the text of the Holy Scripture could hardly meet the elaborate aesthetic standards set by the norms of ancient rhetoric. This is an important topic in the 'clash of cultures' between the pagan world and Christianity in late antiquity.

Surprisingly enough, the fathers drew on pagan ethical and aesthetic concepts of simplicity (Greek *haplôtes*) to defend the Bible, often with reference to a famous passage from 1 Corinthians 2.1. 'Simplicity' combined truth and honesty as opposed to rhetorical 'make up', the superficial *fucus oratorius* of the pagan tradition. Ethical attitudes and aesthetic norms coincide.²³

The topical concept of a Christian *sermo humilis* originated from this argument:²⁴ In Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* we find a similar argument. Augustine did not reject pagan rhetoric *per se* but placed it in the service of Christian proclamation. He put pagan rhetoric in the service of Christianity, and this, of course, implied a re-interpretation of rhetoric. Augustine refers to the association of stylistic level and rhetorical function in Cicero's *Orator* – but interprets Cicero's norms in a new way. For

²¹ Cf. Till, *Das doppelte Erhabene*, 101–126.

²² Till: *Das doppelte Erhabene*, 121–123.

²³ Cf. Till, *Das doppelte Erhabene*, 60–68; see also the passage from Augustine on the *fucus oratorius* in Epistula 137, 18 (Patrologia Latina, ed. Migne J.P., vol. 33, 524).

²⁴ Cf. the classical study by Auerbach, E., "Sermo humilis", in: Auerbach, *Literatursprache und Publikum in der lateinischen Spätantike und im Mittelalter* (Bern: 1958) 25–53; Aukst, P., *Christian Plain Style. The Revolution of a Spiritual Idea* (Montreal: 1995).

Augustine Christian discourse is always great and sublime because of its sublime content. *Res semper magna*, Augustine states in an important passage in the fourth book of *De doctrina christiana*: the holy truth, of course, is always sublime.²⁵ The 'matching' of *stile sublime* and sublime subject matter is reinterpreted in a new way that is not reconcilable with the laws of roman rhetoric. A simple speech without ornament can be sublime because of its subject, as Augustine exemplifies with one passage from the Epistle to the Galatians. The Bible, he says, is *sine fuco*, without the cosmetics of rhetorical *ornatus* that only cover up and hide the truth.

The holy truth of the Bible should be proclaimed not by a skillful and learned orator, but by the heart (Latin: *cor*) itself. The 'inner' heart replaces rhetorical training. It is more important for the orator to 'move' the audience (*movere*) than to 'obey' the norms of rhetorical stylistics. Quintilian argued the opposite in the second book of his *Institutio oratoria* where he compared a physician to an orator. Erich Auerbach judged Augustine's reinterpretation of Ciceronian rhetoric as a deviation from the tradition, even as its destruction.²⁶

III

In the early modern period, these strands merged. Hellenistic literary criticism delivered terms and definitions, while Augustine's *sermo humilis*-postulate formed the ideological background within the dominating Christian context. Hermogenes's influence on (protestant) Biblical philology and hermeneutics was immense. This can be studied in the *Clavis Scripturae Sacrae* (1567), a voluminous work written by the Lutheran theologian Matthias Flacius (Illyricus).²⁷ The two-volume work is one of the founding documents of Protestant Biblical hermeneutics. And it is based completely on categories derived from Hellenistic literary criticism. Hermogenes's theory of ideas provides the categories and classifications, while the roman rhetoricians play no significant role. In particular, the chapter that deals with the sublimity of the Bible is based on Hermogenes's

²⁵ Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* iv.18.35.

²⁶ Auerbach, "Sermo humilis" 32; cf. Prestel P., *Die Rezeption der ciceronischen Rhetorik durch Augustinus* in 'De doctrina christiana' (Frankfurt/Main: 1991) 244–246.

²⁷ Flacius Illyricus M., *De ratione cognoscendi sacras literas/Über den Erkenntnisgrund der Heiligen Schrift, übersetzt, eingeleitet und mit Anmerkungen versehen v. L. Geldsetzer* (Düsseldorf: 1968); Flacius, *Clavis scripturae Sacrae hoc est de sermone S. Litterarum recte cognoscendi*, 2 vols. (Jena: Neuenhahn, 1657).

megethos.²⁸ One prominent example: the sublime contents of the *semnotes* category are applied to the narration of the world's creation. Hermogenes is Christianized once more and the Bible is compared to the pagan works of Thucydides and Plato. The Bible, Flacius says, is distinguished by three qualities of style, that can be interpreted as anti-Ciceronian: *simplicitas*, *efficacia* or rather *emphasis*, and finally, *brevitas*.²⁹

According to Flacius, the *fiat lux* belongs to this category: it is simple and short, but at the same time expresses God's power and potency to create the world with one laconic command. The style of the scripture proves 'competitive' with the stylistic norms of anti-Ciceronianism represented by Justus Lipsius and others.³⁰ The *efficacia* one finds in the Bible, Lipsius says, can be found in Seneca's letters as well.³¹

Similarly to Flacius' *Clavis*, the Protestant theologian Salomon Glassius in his *Philologia sacra* – first published in 1623 and then reprinted in various editions until the end of the 18th century – refers to categories of Hellenistic literary criticism.³² These categories describe the text of the Bible as a complex network of figures and tropes. The *fiat lux* is categorized as 'sublime' using categories from Hermogenes's theory of ideas. Glassius draws his categories from *Peri ideon* and the commentaries and translations of Hermogenes in the 16th and 17th centuries (for example, Johannes Sturm's Latin translation with extensive commentary, 1571). For example: the *fiat lux* is categorized by Glassius as a *metaphora anthropathica*, an accommodation of God to the limited comprehension of man,³³ as he argues with reference to similar textual structures in pagan authors such as Homer and Hesiod. The *fiat lux* is a form of *locutio*, a rhetorical figure.³⁴ Theological and dogmatic concepts like accommodation have their origin in rhetorical categories.

The tremendous influence of Hellenistic literary criticism – and especially the Hermogenian theory of ideas – on the textual and philological

²⁸ Till, *Das doppelte Erhabene*, 146–157.

²⁹ Flacius, *Clavis scripturae Sacrae*, vol. II, 472–483.

³⁰ Croll M.W., "Attic Prose: Lipsius, Montaigne, Bacon", in: Croll, *Style, Rhetoric, and Rhythm*. Essays by M.W. Croll, ed. Patrick J.M. – Evans R.O. (Princeton: 1966) 167–202.

³¹ Lipsius J., *Manuductionis ad stoicam philosophiam libri tres* (Antwerpen: Ex Officina Plantiniana, 1604) 57, cf. Suger, *Sacred Rhetoric*, 154 sq.

³² Glassius S., *Philologia Sacra. His temporibus accomodata a Joh. Aug. Dathio*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Weygand, 1776).

³³ Glassius, *Philologia Sacra*, vol. II, 921.

³⁴ Blümer W., "Akkomodation", in: Ueding G. (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, vol. I (Tübingen 1992) 309–313; Hornig G., "Akkomodation", in: Ritter J. (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. I (Basel 1971) 125–126.

analysis of the Bible has remained widely unknown up to now. Hermogenes's, Longinus's, Ps.-Demetrius's, and Dionysius's concepts and categories characterize the perception of the Bible text that is downright dissected with pagan instruments.

IV

The observation that within core areas of Protestant theology – i.e. in *dogmatics* – rhetorical concepts are of crucial importance for theology is even more remarkable than the mere fact that Biblical philology and hermeneutics are completely built upon rhetorical categories. Protestant 'dogmatics' (as a book genre used in university teaching) usually start with a chapter about the Biblical text as the foundation of protestant theology, according to the important principle of '*sola scriptura*'. You can find in almost all of these books the statement that the text of the Bible is simple and sublime at the same time.³⁵ This assertion is legitimized with reference to the anti-rhetorical tradition – the catchphrase *fucus oratorius* is frequently used – but also with the use of categories from the Hellenistic tradition, where *simplicitas* and *efficacia* occupy a central position. The miracles of the Bible, which can be linked to Longinus's category of the miraculous, are intrinsically sublime.

This is the argument which Johann Gerhard, an influential protestant theologian, uses in his *Loci theologici* (9 volumes, 1610–1622), referring (implicitly) to Ps.-Demetrius and Hermogenes.³⁶ Another important theologian, Johann Franz Buddeus, links the terms *simplicitas* and *maiestas* in order to legitimize the simplicity and sublimity of the Bible: exactly this combination displays God's omnipotence (his *vis*). It is particularly interesting that Buddeus proves this assertion with explicit reference to an edition of Longinus's *Peri hypsous* printed in France in 1663.³⁷ As a professor at Jena University in 1691, Buddeus even presided over the defence of a dissertation that dealt with Longinus.³⁸

Longinus's short treatise thus found its way into Protestant theology. As a pagan author Longinus became, paradoxically, the most important authority for the sublimity of the Bible. In the 18th century numerous

³⁵ Till, *Das doppelte Erhabene*, 157–165.

³⁶ Gerhard J., *Loci theologici*, ed. Cotta J.F., 2 vols. (Tübingen: Cotta, 1763) vol. I, 226.

³⁷ Buddeus J.F., *Institutiones Theologiae Dogmaticae* (Leipzig: Fritsch, 1723) 138.

³⁸ Cf. Till, *Das doppelte Erhabene*, 159.

other theological works cite Longinus and refer to the categories of Hellenistic literary criticism in their books, most emphatically probably Johann Jacob Rambach, one of Buddeus's students at Jena University, in his *Institutiones hermeneuticae Sacrae* from 1735 or rather 1738, where he quotes Longinus's position on *simplicitas* and *maiestas* in detail.³⁹

V

Let me summarize: I have covered a wide field, beginning with Boileau's understanding of the sublime and his juxtaposition of *le sublime* and *le stile sublime*. This has a long prehistory. It is based – to simplify – on two different aesthetic traditions, namely a 'roman' and a 'hellenistic' one. I tried to show that categories taken from Hellenistic literary criticism were perfectly suitable for legitimating a Biblical style that deviated from the stylistic norms of roman rhetoric – in a similar way to the *fiat lux* quotation in Boileau's preface. We can find similar arguments in discussions about the simplicity of the Bible in the patristic tradition. Pagan theorists thus entered the *sanctum* of Protestantism, namely dogmatics – the discipline that regulated the interpretation of the Bible. In short, one could say that these norms (and the core of Protestant beliefs) were formed through rhetorical discourses; pagan rhetorical discourses are, ultimately and paradoxically, the prerequisites for the interpretation of the Bible according to the principle of the *sola scriptura*.

³⁹ Rambach J.J., *Institutiones Hermeneuticae Sacrae* (Jena: Hartung, 1764) 244.

A L'AUNE DU SUBLIME : AUTOUR DU « PARALLÈLE DE CORNEILLE ET RACINE » (1688) DE LA BRUYÈRE

Paul J. Smith

Depuis la parution du *Traité du sublime* (1674), traduit par Nicolas Boileau en collaboration probable avec son frère aîné Gilles, la notion du sublime devient, malgré (ou grâce à) sa fluidité conceptuelle, un critère important de la critique littéraire, à partir duquel on juge – loue ou condamne – les œuvres. Le plus souvent ce recours à l'argument du sublime est explicite, comme dans l'*Art poétique* (1674) de Boileau¹. Parfois, cependant, il se présente de façon plus subtile, voire implicite. C'est ce que nous nous proposons d'étudier dans le célèbre « Parallèle de Corneille et de Racine », extrait des *Caractères* de Jean de La Bruyère (première édition 1688). Ce passage, qui est, comme on va le voir, inspiré du *Parallèle de Corneille et Racine* (1686) de Longepierre², contient non seulement le mot *sublime* (terme absent du texte de Longepierre), mais encore plusieurs autres qualificatifs qui, depuis le *Traité du sublime* de Longin-Boileau, s'appliquent généralement à cette notion. On s'étonne donc que la critique moderne ne se soit pas attardée sur le fait que La Bruyère, dans sa quatrième édition des *Caractères* (1689), ait choisi de placer à la suite de son « Parallèle » quelques observations – tout aussi célèbres – sur le sublime.

Notre question de départ est double : pourquoi cet ajout ? Et pourquoi à cet endroit précis du chapitre « Des ouvrages de l'esprit », c'est-à-dire tout de suite après le « Parallèle de Corneille et de Racine » ? Nicholas Cronk³ a récemment répondu de façon convaincante à la première question en interprétant cet ajout comme une réaction directe à *La Manière de bien penser dans les ouvrages de l'esprit* (1687) du Père Bouhours – nous allons

¹ Sur Boileau et le sublime, voir surtout Brody J., *Boileau and Longinus* (Genève : 1958) et Goyet F., « Raison et sublime dans le premier livre de l'*Art poétique* de Boileau », in Marot P. (éd.), *La Littérature et le sublime* (Toulouse : 2007) 137–160.

² Voir Minel E., « Trois parallèles de Corneille et Racine dans les années 1680–1690 : Longepierre (1686), La Bruyère (1688, 89, 91) et Fontenelle (1693) », *Papers on French Seventeenth-century Literature* 52, 27 (2000) 189–200.

³ Cronk N., *The Classical Sublime : French Neoclassicism and the Language of Literature* (Charlottesville : 2002).

y revenir. Cependant, Cronk n'aborde pas le second point de la question : pourquoi l'ajout sur le sublime suit-il immédiatement le fameux parallèle ?

Afin d'esquisser un début de réponse à cette problématique, rappelons d'abord quelques généralités sur cet ouvrage remarquable que sont les *Caractères*. Comme le titre complet l'indique⁴, ce texte fait suite aux *Caractères* de Théophraste, traduits par La Bruyère lui-même. Ce faisant, en livrant d'abord sa source avant de l'imiter, il permet donc au lecteur de juger de la nouveauté et de la qualité de son imitation à l'aune de son original : une façon de démentir les deux observations apparemment désenchantées qui ouvrent et concluent sa première section, intitulée « Des ouvrages de l'esprit » :

Tout est dit. Et l'on vient trop tard depuis plus de sept mille ans qu'il y a des hommes et qui pensent. [...] l'on ne fait que glaner après les anciens et les habiles d'entre les modernes. (I, 1 (I))⁵

Et :

Horace ou Despréaux [= Boileau] l'a dit avant vous. – Je le crois sur votre parole ; mais je l'ai dit comme mien. Ne puis-je pas penser après eux une chose vraie, et que d'autres encore penseront après moi ? (I, 69 (I))

La réponse à cette dernière question (rhétorique) est sans aucun doute affirmative, et c'est au lecteur de juger où sont les parts d'imitation et de nouveauté dans la première section qu'il vient de parcourir. Et c'est encore à lui de décider s'il doit compter l'auteur parmi ces « habiles d'entre les modernes », dont la toute première observation fait mention...

Corneille et Racine en parallèle

Comparée au texte de Théophraste, la première section contient une étonnante variété de réflexions, de maximes, de bons conseils et de portraits littéraires, souvent satiriques, qui montrent non seulement comment La Bruyère entre en émulation avec son modèle, mais qui ont aussi pour

⁴ *Les Caractères de Théophraste traduit du grec, avec les Caractères ou les Mœurs de ce Siècle*.

⁵ Edition consultée: La Bruyère Jean de, *Les Caractères* [...], éd. R. Garapon (Paris: 1962). Afin de permettre au lecteur de se retrouver dans les différentes éditions des *Caractères*, nous nous référons à l'édition de Garapon en adoptant sa numérotation. Le passage sur le sublime est donc indiqué de la façon suivante : I:55 (IV), ce qui renvoie à la première section ("Des ouvrages de l'esprit"), observation 55, quatrième édition.

fonction de positionner son texte dans l'actualité de la critique littéraire. C'est ce positionnement que nous allons étudier en détail dans les pages qui suivent, en commençant par le « Parallèle de Corneille et de Racine ». Citons d'abord quelques extraits de ce célèbre « Parallèle » :

CORNEILLE ne peut être égalé dans les endroits où il excelle: il a pour lors un caractère *original et inimitable*; mais il est inégal. [...]. Dans quelques-unes de ses meilleurs pièces, il y a des *fautes inexcusables* contre les mœurs, un style de déclamateur qui arrête l'action et la fait languir, des négligences dans les vers et dans l'expression qu'on ne peut comprendre en un si grand homme. Ce qu'il y a eu en lui de plus *éminent, c'est l'esprit, qu'il avait sublime*, auquel il a été redevable de certains vers, les plus heureux qu'on ait jamais lus ailleurs, de la conduite de son théâtre, qu'il a quelquefois hasardée *contre les règles* des anciens, et enfin de ses dénouements; car il ne s'est pas toujours assujetti au goût des Grecs et à leur grande simplicité [...]. Il semble qu'il y ait plus de ressemblance dans ceux de RACINE, et qui tendent un peu plus à une même chose; mais il est égal, soutenu, toujours le même partout, soit pour le dessein et la conduite de ses pièces, qui sont justes, régulières, prises dans le bon sens et dans la nature, soit pour la versification, qui est correcte, riche dans ses rimes, élégante, nombreuse, harmonieuse: exact imitateur des anciens, dont il a suivi scrupuleusement la netteté et la simplicité de l'action; à qui le grand et le merveilleux n'ont pas même manqué, ainsi qu'à Corneille, ni le touchant ni le pathétique. [...]. Si cependant il est permis de faire entre eux quelque comparaison [...], peut-être qu'on pourrait parler ainsi: « Corneille nous assujettit à ses caractères et à ses idées, Racine se conforme aux nôtres; *celui-là peint les hommes comme ils devraient être, celui-ci les peint tels qu'ils sont*. Il y a plus dans le premier de ce que *l'on admire*, et de ce que l'on doit même imiter; il y a plus dans le second de ce que l'on reconnaît dans les autres, ou de ce que l'on éprouve dans soi-même. L'un *élève, étonne, maîtrise*, instruit; l'autre *plaît, remue, touche*, pénètre. Ce qu'il y a de *plus beau, de plus noble et de plus impérieux dans la raison*, est manié par le premier; et par l'autre, ce qu'il y a de plus flatteur et de plus délicat dans la passion. Ce sont dans celui-là des maximes, des règles, des préceptes; et dans celui-ci, du goût et des sentiments. L'on est plus occupé aux pièces de Corneille; l'on est plus ébranlé et plus attendri à celles de Racine. Corneille est plus moral, Racine plus naturel. Il semble que *l'un imite Sophocle*, et que l'autre doit plus à Euripide ». [I, 54 (I); nous soulignons les énoncés sur lesquels nous allons revenir]

Que penser de ce parallèle ? Est-il impartial ? Un critique moderne tel que Robert Garapon ne croit pas à l'impartialité de La Bruyère :

On a beaucoup loué l'impartialité de l'ensemble de cette réflexion critique de La Bruyère [...]; je ne pense pas, pour ma part, que cet éloge soit très justifié, car La Bruyère montre ici une préférence évidente pour Racine, et il s'arrange fort habilement pour que le lecteur conclue en faveur de Racine. Il faudrait relever toutes les insinuations contre Corneille que ce morceau

contient... Mais Corneille n'était-il pas le frère et l'oncle des principaux adversaires de notre auteur⁶ ?

Milorad R. Margitic, qui, par une lecture rapprochée, a répondu à cette invitation en relevant « toutes les insinuations contre Corneille », en arrive à la même conclusion que Garapon. Selon Margitic, des jugements comme la phrase précitée – « il y a des fautes inexcusables contre les mœurs, un style de déclamateur qui arrête l'action et la fait languir, des négligences dans les vers et dans l'expression qu'on ne peut comprendre en un si grand homme » – sont autant de « coups de hache appliqués à l'ensemble de l'œuvre » cornélienne⁷.

Reste cependant l'emploi du qualificatif « sublime », appliqué à Corneille et non à Racine. Non seulement « l'esprit » de Corneille est explicitement qualifié de « sublime », mais les expressions que nous avons mises en italique dans l'extrait choisi indiquent en outre que Corneille répond à plusieurs des critères exigés, tels qu'on les trouve formulés dans le *Traité du sublime*. Citons, à ce sujet, le passage suivant tiré du traité de Longin-Boileau :

[Le sublime] ravit, il transporte, et produit en nous une certaine admiration mêlée d'étonnement et de surprise, qui est toute autre chose que de plaire seulement [...]. Il donne au Discours une certaine vigueur noble, un force invincible qui enlève l'ame de quiconque nous écoute [...] il renverse tout comme un foudre⁸.

Les termes « admiration », « étonnement », « vigueur noble » et la formule « qui enlève l'ame » nous renvoient directement aux qualificatifs que La Bruyère applique à Corneille dans son « Parallèle ». Cela vaut aussi pour cet autre commentaire de Longin-Boileau :

[...] tout ce qui est véritablement Sublime, a cela de propre, quand on l'écoute, qu'il élève l'âme, et luy fait concevoir une plus haute opinion d'elle-même, la remplissant de joye et de je ne sçai quel noble orgueil⁹.

Des qualificatifs qui conviennent à merveille au héros cornélien, et à l'effet d'*admiration* que celui-ci est censé susciter, et que La Bruyère résume dans cette célèbre formule : « [Corneille] peint les hommes comme ils devraient être, [Racine] les peint tels qu'ils sont ».

⁶ Paragon dans La Bruyère, *Les Caractères* 89.

⁷ Margitic M.R., « La Bruyère entre Corneille et Racine », *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises* 44 (1992) 307–321.

⁸ Boileau, *Œuvres complètes*, éd. Adam A. et Escal F. (Paris : 1966) 341–342.

⁹ Boileau, *Œuvres complètes* 348.

Pour les lecteurs qui ont à l'esprit la traduction française du *Traité du sublime*, les qualités que La Bruyère prête à Racine paraissent, au contraire, assez ternes. Pour prendre le titre du chapitre XXVII de Longin-Boileau, « Si l'on doit préférer le médiocre parfait au sublime qui a quelques défauts », Racine serait ce « médiocre parfait » alors que Corneille représenterait le « sublime qui a quelques défauts »¹⁰. Citons aussi les dernières phrases de ce chapitre, qui établissent une comparaison entre les réguliers Bacchylide et Ion, et les irréguliers Pindare et Sophocle :

Et [...] pour le Lyrique, choisiriez-vous plustost d'estre Bacchylide que Pindare ? ou pour la Tragedie, Ion ce Poëte de Chio que Sophocle ? En effet ceux-là ne font jamais de faux pas, et n'ont rien qui ne soit écrit avec beaucoup d'élégance et d'agrément. Il n'en est pas ainsi de Pindare et de Sophocle ; car au milieu de leur plus grande violence, durant qu'ils tonnent et foudroyent, pour ainsi dire, souvent leur ardeur vient mal à propos à s'éteindre, et ils tombent malheureusement. Et toutefois y a t-il un homme de bon sens qui daignast comparer tous les ouvrages d'Ion ensemble au seul Œdipe de Sophocle¹¹ ?

En se rappelant ces lignes, le lecteur de La Bruyère aura tendance à voir dans le régulier Racine un second Ion. On remarquera ainsi combien les qualificatifs « élégant », « égal, soutenu, toujours le même partout », utilisés par La Bruyère pour définir le style de Racine, coïncident avec les caractéristiques que Longin attribue à Ion, alors que l'auteur des *Caractères* compare, avec beaucoup d'emphase, Corneille à Sophocle (« Corneille imite Sophocle »). Qui plus est, en affirmant que « [le sublime] est toute autre chose que de plaire seulement », Longin semble *a priori* exclure Racine du sublime, puisque celui-ci, dans sa préface de *Bérénice* (1671), avait fait la célèbre remarque : « La principale Règle est de plaire et de toucher. Toutes les autres ne sont faites que pour parvenir à cette première » – observation qui trouve son écho dans le « Parallèle » de La Bruyère : « [Racine] *plaît*, remue, *touche*, pénètre ». À ce niveau de lecture, la brève remarque de La Bruyère selon laquelle « le grand et le merveilleux n'ont pas même manqué [à Racine] », et cette autre phrase, sous forme de question rhétorique, où il déclare « Quelle grandeur ne se remarque point

¹⁰ Boileau, *Œuvres complètes* 387. Un lecteur attentif de La Bruyère remarquera cependant la suggestion implicite de l'auteur, selon laquelle Corneille n'a pas *quelques* défauts, mais *beaucoup* de défauts, et qu'il est, par conséquent, loin de répondre à la définition longinienne du sublime.

¹¹ Boileau, *Œuvres complètes* 388.

en Mithridate, en Porus et en Burrhus ?¹² », ne peuvent suffire à dissiper l'impression que Racine ne serait pas sublime.

Le problème pour La Bruyère réside donc dans son utilisation quelque peu hasardeuse du qualificatif « sublime », que le lecteur est vite amené à appliquer à Corneille et non à Racine, alors que l'intention de l'auteur tend plutôt à l'inverse : suggérer la supériorité de Racine sur Corneille. Comment, dans les éditions ultérieures de ses *Caractères*, La Bruyère va-t-il réparer cette imprudence, et remettre en balance ce parallèle, en soulignant, au mieux l'égalité entre les deux auteurs, et de préférence la supériorité de Racine, sans pour autant changer son texte, qui, entre-temps, est devenu célèbre ? Pour parvenir à son but, La Bruyère utilise une double stratégie. Dans un premier temps, dès l'année suivante, il ajoute un texte où il revient sur la notion du sublime telle que la définissent Longin et Boileau, tout en l'adaptant pour qu'elle soit également applicable à Racine. Puis, au fil des éditions ultérieures, en ajoutant une série d'autres parallèles d'écrivains, il problématise le genre même du parallèle : de ce fait, celui de Corneille et de Racine peut désormais se lire comme un plaidoyer de la *complémentarité* ou de l'*opposition* entre les deux auteurs, sans qu'il soit nécessairement question d'une quelconque *supériorité* de l'un sur l'autre.

Les ajouts sur le sublime

Observons d'abord comment La Bruyère a recours au sublime pour rééquilibrer son « Parallèle ». Dans la première édition, ce « Parallèle » est immédiatement suivi de trois remarques sur l'éloquence, qui sont apparemment sans lien direct avec le texte précédent. Dans la quatrième édition, l'auteur ajoute trois observations sur le sublime, dont la première rattache ce concept à l'éloquence en utilisant l'équation suivante : « L'éloquence est au sublime ce que le tout est à sa partie » [I, 55 (IV)]. Le fait que le sublime est ici rangé sous l'éloquence est d'autant plus intéressant que La Bruyère a d'abord établi une distinction entre logique et éloquence. Selon lui, la logique appartient au domaine de la raison, alors que l'éloquence dépend de la passion de l'orateur :

Il semble que la logique est l'art de convaincre de quelque vérité; et l'éloquence un don de l'âme, lequel nous rend maîtres du cœur et de l'esprit des

¹² Personnages de Racine.

autres; qui fait que nous leur inspirons ou que nous leur persuadons tout ce qui nous plaît. [I, 55 (I)]

En appliquant ces rapprochements – entre sublime et éloquence d'une part, et entre éloquence et passion d'autre part – au « Parallèle de Corneille et de Racine », l'auteur semble suggérer que Corneille, qui excelle surtout dans le domaine de la raison (« Ce qu'il y a de plus beau, de plus noble et de plus impérieux dans la raison »), serait, par là, exclu du sublime, alors que Racine, dont l'art relève surtout de la passion (« ce qu'il y a de plus flatteur et de plus délicat dans la passion »), serait susceptible d'être sublime.

Considérons maintenant la deuxième observation de La Bruyère sur le sublime :

Qu'est-ce que le sublime ? Il ne paraît pas qu'on l'ait défini. Est-ce une figure ? Naît-il des figures, ou du moins de quelques figures ? Tout genre d'écrire reçoit-il le sublime, ou s'il n'y a que les grands sujets qui en soient capables ? Peut-il briller autre chose dans l'élogue qu'un beau naturel, et dans les lettres familières comme dans les conversations qu'une grande délicatesse ? ou plutôt le naturel et le délicat ne sont-ils pas le sublime des ouvrages dont ils font la perfection ? Qu'est-ce que le sublime ? Où entre le sublime ? [I, 55 (IV)]

Les critiques ont souvent souligné le caractère curieux, pour ne pas dire mystificateur, de ces deux questions « Qu'est-ce que le sublime ? » et « Est-ce une figure ? », car, avant La Bruyère, on avait, bien sûr, essayé de définir le sublime – nous n'avons qu'à penser à Longin et à Boileau, quoique la définition de celui-ci aboutisse à ce fameux « je ne sais quoi de ». Mais pour Nicholas Cronk, c'est surtout la question « le naturel et le délicat ne sont-ils pas le sublime des ouvrages dont ils font la perfection ? » qui pose problème. Cronk y voit une référence à Bouhours, pour qui le naïf et le délicat peuvent être de l'ordre du sublime : « La délicatesse ajoute je ne sais quoi de sublime ». Selon Cronk, La Bruyère « reverse the proposition by suggesting with a leading question ('plutôt') that 'le naïf et le délicat' constitue merely a paler version of the *sublime* fit only for the lower genres » (p. 135)¹³.

¹³ Notons un point problématique dans l'interprétation de Cronk. La Bruyère écrit : « L'éloquence peut se trouver dans les entretiens et dans tout genre d'écrire ». Puis il ajoute l'équation que nous avons citée plus haut : « L'éloquence est au sublime ce que le tout est à sa partie ». En toute logique, le sublime appartenant à l'éloquence, il pourrait donc se trouver aussi « dans tout genre d'écrire ». C'est pourquoi il est possible, pensons-nous, d'envisager les questions que La Bruyère pose au sujet du sublime comme de véritables

Cependant, dans le contexte immédiat du « Parallèle de Corneille et Racine », cette lecture entraîne une conséquence sérieuse : ce serait nier, ou du moins fortement problématiser le sublime dans l'œuvre de Racine, dont l'excellence consiste justement, selon le « Parallèle », dans le naturel et le délicat. Pour résoudre ce problème – Racine n'est-il donc pas sublime ? –, La Bruyère va suggérer une réponse définitive dans sa troisième observation consacrée à cette notion. Celle-ci commence par une sorte de réponse à la question posée dans la deuxième observation : « Est-ce une figure ? ». La Bruyère y donne, par ordre d'importance, les définitions de plusieurs figures de style : synonyme, antithèse, métaphore, hyperbole.

Les synonymes sont plusieurs dictions ou plusieurs phrases différentes qui signifient une même chose. L'antithèse est une opposition de deux vérités qui se donnent du jour l'une à l'autre. La métaphore ou la comparaison emprunte, d'une chose étrangère une image sensible et naturelle d'une vérité. L'hyperbole exprime au delà de la vérité pour ramener l'esprit à la mieux connaître. Le sublime ne peint que la vérité, mais en un sujet noble; il la peint tout entière, dans sa cause et dans son effet; il est l'expression ou l'image la plus digne de cette vérité. Les esprits médiocres ne trouvent point l'unique expression, et usent de synonymes. Les jeunes gens sont éblouis de l'éclat de l'antithèse, et s'en servent. Les esprits justes, et qui aiment à faire des images qui soient précises, donnent naturellement dans la comparaison et la métaphore. Les esprits vifs, pleins de feu, et qu'une vaste imagination emporte hors des règles et de la justesse, ne peuvent s'assouvir de l'hyperbole. Pour le sublime, il n'y a, même entre les grands génies, que les plus élevés qui en soient capables. (I, 55 (IV))

La série se termine par le sublime – ce qui en fait donc une figure de style supérieure.

Dans ce troisième passage sur le sublime, La Bruyère distingue, toujours par ordre croissant d'importance, les catégories de gens à qui correspondent le mieux ces figures énumérées : les médiocres, les jeunes gens, les esprits justes, les esprits vifs et les rares génies. Or, l'avant-dernière catégorie, qui comprend donc les esprits vifs, nous évoque aussitôt Corneille, non seulement parce que celui-ci dispose d'« une vaste imagination [qui] emporte hors des règles et de la justesse », comme c'est indiqué dans le

interrogations, dirigées non pas *contre* Bouhours, mais plutôt abondant dans le sens de celui-ci : le sublime peut éventuellement inclure le naturel et la délicatesse. En élargissant ainsi la notion du sublime, il est donc permis de suggérer que le théâtre de Racine puisse relever de cette catégorie.

« Parallèle », mais surtout parce que ce poète décrit « les hommes comme ils devraient être », c'est-à-dire « au delà de la vérité », en se situant du côté de l'hyperbole. Tandis que la dernière catégorie, celle des rares génies, peut très bien inclure Racine, car celui-ci peint les hommes « tels qu'ils sont », c'est-à-dire qu'« il peint la vérité toute entière ».

C'est sans doute dans le même but de corriger son « Parallèle » en faveur de Racine que La Bruyère a inséré, toujours dans la quatrième édition des *Caractères*, l'observation suivante, remarquable d'ambiguïté :

Quelle prodigieuse distance entre un bel ouvrage et un ouvrage parfait ou régulier ! Je ne sais s'il s'en est encore trouvé de ce dernier genre. Il est peut-être moins difficile aux rares génies de rencontrer le grand et le sublime, que d'éviter toute sorte de fautes. [I, 30 (IV)]

Et La Bruyère de faire l'éloge du *Cid* (1636), pièce irrégulière mais à grand succès de Corneille, pour conclure brusquement par un curieux volte-face :

Le Cid enfin est l'un des plus beaux poèmes que l'on puisse faire ; et l'une des meilleures critiques qui aient été faites sur aucun sujet est celle du *Cid*. [I, 30 (IV)]

La Bruyère pense probablement ici aux *Sentiments de l'Académie sur le Cid* de 1638, texte critique qui avait fait le procès des irrégularités de la pièce de Corneille, et qui, par conséquent, avait déclenché la « Querelle du *Cid* ». Dans la perspective du « Parallèle », il est intéressant de noter que cette observation tend de fait à rehausser ceux qui savent obéir aux règles (comme Racine, qui n'est pas mentionné ici) : si ces auteurs ne sont peut-être pas supérieurs aux irréguliers sublimes, ils sont au moins leurs égaux.

Approches génériques du « Parallèle »

Passons maintenant à la seconde stratégie à laquelle recourt La Bruyère pour remettre en balance le « Parallèle », et qui consiste à renouveler le genre même de cet exercice. A ce sujet, regardons d'abord de plus près les caractéristiques traditionnelles de ce genre. Parmi celles-ci, notons la difficulté même du genre, qui, depuis les *Progymnasmata* grecs de Théon (I^e–II^e siècles), d'Hermogène (II^e siècle) et d'Aphthonius (IV^e–V^e siècles), est classé parmi les exercices scolaires les plus ardues, et destiné aux seuls étudiants avancés. Selon Hermogène, la difficulté du parallèle tient surtout

à la vivacité d'esprit qu'il requiert pour maintenir l'intérêt du public sans l'ennuyer : « Un tel exercice réclame un orateur vigoureux et habile, et un développement d'une constante vivacité, car les métabases [c'est-à-dire le passage d'une chose à l'autre] doivent être rapides »¹⁴. Grégory Gicquiaud a raison d'y voir la source de la réflexion de Longepierre à propos des difficultés qu'il a lui-même rencontrées dans son entreprise de mettre en parallèle Corneille et Racine. Voici une longue citation extraite de la Préface de Longepierre :

Il suffit du nom de ces deux grands hommes, pour faire concevoir les périls d'un tel dessein : et plus leur mérite est extraordinaire et connu, plus on doit craindre d'en entreprendre la comparaison [...]. Peut-être n'est il pas fort malaisé de se tirer avantageusement du parallèle de deux grands Rois, de deux fameux Capitaines, de deux habiles Politiques, etc., mais non pas de celui de deux auteurs. L'agrément de ces sortes de composition consiste dans une certaine vivacité, qui doit tout son éclat à la brièveté d'un style serré et concis [...]. Cette brièveté de style est aisée à garder, lorsqu'on compare deux Rois, deux Conquérants, etc., parce qu'on compare alors inclination à inclination, vertu à vertu, action à action ; choses connues au lecteur, et qu'il n'est pas besoin par conséquent de rapporter, et d'opposer. Mais lorsqu'on met deux Auteurs en parallèle, ce n'est pas de leurs personnes mais de leurs Ouvrages dont il faut parler, ou plutôt raisonner ; ce qui ne peut se faire en peu de mots : et l'on se trouve engagé dans une espèce de critique qui ne peut avoir ni l'agrément d'un parallèle, ni la solidité d'une dissertation sans qu'on puisse satisfaire un Lecteur inquiet, qui en rencontre toujours trop pour son plaisir, jamais assez pour son instruction. Cette difficulté s'augmente, lorsqu'il s'agit de deux auteurs aussi connus de tout le monde que Monsieur Corneille, et Monsieur Racine. Il n'y a personne qui ne se mêle d'en juger ; et peu sont capables de le faire par leurs propres lumières¹⁵.

Ce passage montre bien pourquoi La Bruyère a choisi de faire précisément le parallèle de Corneille et de Racine. Non seulement parce qu'il relève ainsi le défi de la brièveté stylistique propre au genre, mais encore parce qu'il s'agit de deux auteurs, qui sont, en outre, les plus grands poètes de l'époque et les plus discutés. C'est donc par son style laconique, sa brièveté lapidaire, parfois déconcertante, et d'une nature plus allusive qu'explicative, que le « Parallèle » de La Bruyère cherche à rivaliser avec

¹⁴ Hermogène, *L'Art rhétorique*, éd. Michel Patillon (Paris: 1997) 145, cité et commenté par Gicquiaud G., « La balance de Clio : réflexions sur la poétique et la rhétorique du parallèle », in Bernier M.A. (éd.), *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes : rhétorique, histoire et esthétique au siècle des Lumières* (Québec : 2007) 29-46 (32).

¹⁵ Longepierre, *Médée. Tragédie. Suivie du Parallèle de Monsieur Corneille et de Monsieur Racine* (1686) [...], éd. E. Minel (Paris : 2000) 164.

celui de son devancier Longepierre. Il se présente comme un morceau de bravoure, peut-être même le plus éclatant de la première section des *Caractères*.

Autre caractéristique traditionnelle du genre, cet exercice exige toujours un vainqueur. Comme le remarque Grégory Gicquiaud, « Tout parallèle s'apparente à un concours »¹⁶. Cette exigence crée, bien sûr, une certaine attente auprès du lecteur du « Parallèle » de La Bruyère, car celui-là s'attendra à connaître le vainqueur. Or, il s'avère que dès la quatrième édition des *Caractères*, La Bruyère va chercher à déjouer cette attente, en insérant, dans la première section de son livre, une grande variété d'autres parallèles. Ainsi, dans la cinquième édition (1690), La Bruyère en ajoute sept consécutifs (I, 39–45), qui tous présentent une critique littéraire de deux auteurs à la fois. Ils viennent, de la sorte, compléter le bref parallèle entre Térence et Molière, déjà ajouté dans la quatrième édition (I, 38). Le tableau ci-dessous en présente la liste :

Observations	Auteurs jugés
I, 38 (IV)	Térence et Molière
I, 39 (V)	Malherbe et Théophile de Viau
I, 40 (V)	Ronsard et Guez de Balzac
I, 41 (V)	Marot et Ronsard
I, 42 (V)	Ronsard et Marot ; Racan et Malherbe
I, 43 (V)	Marot et Rabelais
I, 44 (V)	Deux critiques anonymes, lecteurs de Montaigne
I, 45 (V)	Jacques Amyot et Coëffeteau ; Balzac et Voiture

En comparant ces observations binaires, on constate une étonnante variété dans la façon dont ce binarisme est utilisé. La Bruyère développe son art de la comparaison. Ainsi, dans l'observation sur Térence et Molière, l'auteur souligne à la fois leur différence et leur complémentarité :

Il n'a manqué à Térence que d'être moins froid : quelle pureté, quelle exactitude, quelle politesse, quelle élégance, quels caractères ! Il n'a manqué à Molière que d'éviter le jargon et le barbarisme, et d'écrire purement : quel feu, quelle naïveté [...] Mais quel homme on aurait pu faire de ces deux comiques ! (I, 38 (IV))

¹⁶ Gicquiaud, "La balance de Clio" 35. Citons, parmi les exemples que La Bruyère et ses lecteurs contemporains connaissent bien, les *Vies parallèles* de Plutarque (dans la traduction d'Amyot), et le chapitre "Defence de Seneque et de Plutarque" des *Essais* de Montaigne (II.32).

Par contre, il choisit d'opposer Malherbe et Viau, suggérant sa préférence pour le premier (I, 39). Mais si Ronsard et Balzac sont également mis en opposition, c'est seulement par rapport au genre qu'ils ont pratiqué (vers vs. prose), car La Bruyère porte le même jugement élogieux, quoique ambivalent, sur leur postérité littéraire : « Ronsard et Balzac ont eu, chacun dans leur genre, assez de bon et de mauvais pour former après eux de très grands hommes en vers et en prose » [I, 40 (V)]. Marot, dans les observations I, 41 et I, 42, est clairement préféré à Ronsard, quoiqu'ils soient, selon La Bruyère, tous les deux inférieurs à Racan et à Malherbe. Dans l'observation I, 43, Marot et Rabelais sont simultanément critiqués (« Marot et Rabelais sont inexcusables d'avoir semé l'ordure dans leurs écrits ») – un point de ressemblance qui sert également de prétexte pour décrier la monstruosité de Rabelais, selon une imagerie empruntée aux *Arts poétiques* d'Horace et de Boileau :

Rabelais surtout est incompréhensible : son livre est une énigme, quoi qu'on veuille dire, inexplicable ; c'est une chimère, c'est le visage d'une belle femme avec des pieds et une queue de serpent, ou de quelque autre bête plus difforme ; c'est un monstrueux assemblage d'une morale fine et ingénieuse, et d'une sale corruption. Où il est mauvais, il passe bien loin au delà du pire, c'est le charme de la canaille ; où il est bon, il va jusques à l'exquis et à l'excellent, il peut être le mets des plus délicats. [I, 43 (V)]

En ce qui concerne l'observation consacrée à Montaigne, ses deux critiques anonymes sont habilement opposés l'un à l'autre, et jugés tous les deux inférieurs à lui – qui n'est d'ailleurs pas « exempt de toute sorte de blâme » :

L'un ne pensait pas assez pour goûter un auteur qui pense beaucoup ; l'autre pense trop subtilement pour s'accommoder de pensées qui sont réelles. (I, 44 (V))

En revanche, il n'oppose pas Jacques Amyot et Coëffeteau, dont les louanges servent seulement à annoncer les noms de Balzac et de Voiture, celui-ci étant, des quatre auteurs, le seul véritablement jugé – et négativement.

On constate donc que cette volonté de varier chacune des observations fondées sur une présentation binaire de deux auteurs est récurrente : chaque observation implique un léger changement dans l'horizon d'attente du lecteur, qui croit connaître le genre du parallèle, mais qui doit vite conclure à sa fluidité générique. La Bruyère procède en cela de la même façon que dans ses célèbres portraits – on pense à Giton et Phédon (6, 83 (VI)), Ménalque (11, 7 (VI)), à la série de portraits autour de celui de Gnathon (11, 121 (IV)), et à Onuphre (13, 24 (VI)) : à la différence

des *Caractères* de Théophraste, chaque portrait est conçu différemment et fait preuve, par là, d'un souci permanent de variation par rapport au modèle théophrastien. En semant ainsi le trouble dans le genre du parallèle, jusqu'à le rendre plus équivoque, La Bruyère invite donc le lecteur à se défaire de tout a priori : contrairement aux lois du genre, le « Parallèle de Corneille et de Racine » n'a pas nécessairement un vainqueur – et si le lecteur croit en avoir trouvé un, ce n'est pas nécessairement le « sublime » Corneille. Une seconde lecture lui apprendra même que, si vainqueur il y a, ce serait plutôt Racine.

Conclusion

En premier lieu, La Bruyère a inséré ces observations sur le sublime dans ses *Caractères* afin de corriger et nuancer après coup son « Parallèle de Corneille et de Racine » en faveur de ce dernier. Mais ce « Parallèle » semble avoir eu tant de retentissement que La Bruyère se sent obligé d'en donner encore une autre correction dans son *Discours de réception à l'Académie française* (1693). Après avoir évoqué de manière détournée son propre « Parallèle » (« le monde s'accoutume à en voir faire la comparaison [entre Corneille et Racine] »), La Bruyère poursuit :

Quelques-uns ne souffrent pas que Corneille, le grand Corneille, lui soit préféré : quelques autres, qu'il lui soit égalé : ils en appellent à l'autre siècle ; ils attendent la fin de quelques vieillards qui, touchés indifféremment de tout ce qui rappelle leurs premières années, n'aiment peut-être dans *Œdipe*¹⁷ que le souvenir de leur jeunesse¹⁸.

Selon Margitic (p. 309), La Bruyère affirmerait ici, de façon agressive, sa préférence pour Racine :

La Bruyère exprime sans ambages, impatiemment et agressivement même, son aversion pour Corneille et sa préférence pour Racine, tout en révélant son penchant pour la caricature grotesque, c'est-à-dire pour le burlesque [...]. L'œuvre cornélienne y est réduite au seul *Œdipe*, et ses admirateurs à de vieux gâteaux dont le jugement esthétique serait prisonnier de leur nostalgie sénile¹⁹.

¹⁷ Tragédie de Corneille (1659).

¹⁸ La Bruyère, *Caractères* 506.

¹⁹ Margitic, "La balance de Cléo" 309.

Nous croyons cependant que cette préférence s'exprime de façon plus subtile. En effet, si le lecteur n'a aucune envie de s'identifier aux partisans « séniles » de Corneille, il ne se sentira pas plus attiré vers le camp de Racine, que La Bruyère désigne par les qualificatifs quelque peu irrévérrencieux « quelques-uns » et « quelques autres ». La Bruyère réclame en fait plus de subtilité et de nuance dans le jugement – tous les partisans de Corneille ne sont pas séniles, et tous ceux qui soutiennent Racine ne sont pas de passifs observateurs attendant la mort prochaine des vieux cornéliens. Et la mention de l'*Œdipe* de Corneille ne contient-elle pas une référence cachée au sublime ? Ne se rapporte-t-elle pas au *Traité du sublime*, qui cite, on l'a vu, comme exemple du sublime, parmi les œuvres de Sophocle, son « seul *Œdipe* »²⁰ ? Nous avons donc affaire ici à cette même insaisissable ambiguïté, qui caractérise aussi l'ensemble de ses *Caractères*, et dont on trouve l'expression emblématique à la fin de ceux-ci : « Si on ne goûte point ces *Caractères*, je m'en étonne ; et si on les goûte, je m'en étonne de même » [16, 50 (I)].

Peut-être pouvons-nous évoquer une autre raison – encore moins avouée que la première – qui aurait conduit La Bruyère à ajouter le passage sur le sublime et à lier ce concept à l'éloquence : il inviterait, par là, le lecteur à ranger ses *Caractères* dans la catégorie même du sublime. On ne doute pas, en effet, que La Bruyère ait vivement souscrit à la remarque suivante, tirée de la Préface de Boileau au *Traité du sublime* :

Longin ne s'est pas contenté, comme Aristote et Hermogène, de nous donner des preceptes tous secs et dépouillés d'ornemens. Il n'a pas voulu tomber dans le défaut qu'il reproche à Cecilius, qui avoit, dit-il, écrit du Sublime en stile bas. En traitant des beautés de l'Elocution, il a employé toutes les finesses de l'Elocution. Souvent il fait figure qu'il enseigne ; et en parlant du Sublime, il est lui-mesme tres-sublime. Cependant il fait cela si à propos et avec tant d'art, qu'on ne sçauroit l'accuser en pas un endroit de sortir du stile didactique²¹.

Ecrire du sublime, de façon sublime, mais sans l'afficher, voici sans doute le but inavoué de ses ajouts sur le sublime. Et, en dernière instance, on pourrait encore appliquer la précédente citation au texte même du « Parallèle » : en rivalisant avec la version de Longepierre, La Bruyère vise au sublime.

²⁰ Boileau, *Œuvres complètes* 387.

²¹ Boileau, *Œuvres complètes* 333.

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II. TRANSLATIONS OF THE SUBLIME INTO THE VISUAL ARTS, ARCHITECTURE AND THE THEATRE

ORRORE, TERRORE, TIMORE.
VASARI UND DAS ERHABENE

Hana Gründler

Wenige Passagen in Giorgio Vasaris (1511–1574) *Vite* sind so aufwühlend, wie die Schilderung von Raffaels (1483–1520) *Borgobrand* [Abb. 1]. In der Lebensbeschreibung des Urbinate wird die ‘Todesfurcht’ der Menschen im Angesicht der lodernden Flammen gekonnt vor dem inneren Auge des Lesers heraufbeschworen und das Ereignis in all seinen Details geschildert. So sieht man den Sturmwind, der ‘Haare und Kleider mit schrecklichster Wut durcheinanderwirbelt’, Frauen, die versuchen, den Brand zu löschen und sich ‘blind vor Rauch’ selbst nicht mehr erkennen sowie eine verzweifelte Mutter, die ihre Kinder schlägt, ‘auf daß sie vor den Trümmern und der Feuersbrunst flüchten mögen.’¹ In der Ekphrasis von Palma il Vecchios *Sturm* [Abb. 2] und Giulio Romanos *Sala dei Giganti* [Abb. 3, s. 98] operiert Vasari ebenfalls mit Begriffen wie ‘Angst’, ‘Todesfurcht’ oder ‘Raserei’ und äußert im Fall des *Sturms*, noch nie ein ‘ähnlich schrekenerregendes Gemälde’ gesehen zu haben.² Zudem betont er die Bravour der Künstler in der mimetischen Darstellung der entsetzlichen Spektakel

¹ Bei diesem Aufsatz handelt es sich um die revidierte Fassung eines Tagungsbeitrags, der in folgenden Akten erschienen ist: Koppenleitner V.F. – Rößler H. – Thimann M. (Hgg.), *Urbs incensa. Ästhetische Transformationen der brennenden Stadt in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin: 2011). Vasari G., *Das Leben des Raffael*, übersetzt von H. Gründler und V. Lorini, hg., komm. und engl. von H. Gründler (Berlin: 2004) 65–66.

² ‘Was mehr? Ich für meinen Teil erinnere mich nicht daran, jemals ein ähnlich schrekenerregendes Gemälde gesehen zu haben.’ Vasari G., ‘Das Leben des Palma il Vecchio und des Lorenzo Lotto’, übersetzt, hg., komm. und engl. von H. Gründler, in Vasari G., *Das Leben des Giorgione, Correggio, Palma il Vecchio und Lorenzo Lotto*, hg. von S. Feser und H. Gründler (Berlin: 2008) 61. Der vollständige Titel von Palma il Vecchios Gemälde lautet *Die Stadt Venedig wird durch ein Wunder der Heiligen Markus, Nikolaus und Georg vor einem Gewittersturm gerettet*, genannt *Der Sturm*. Vgl. auch folgende Passage aus dem Leben des Giulio Romano, in der Vasari insbesondere die bildinternen Affekte der Figuren thematisiert: ‘Auch die Grazien und die Stunden stehen dort völlig verängstigt [...]. Der Mond steuert mit Saturn und Janus auf die hellste Stelle der Wolken zu, um sich von diesem entsetzlichen Schrecken und der Raserei zu entfernen.’ Vasari G., *Das Leben des Giulio Romano*, übersetzt von V. Lorini, hg., komm. und engl. von M. Burioni (Berlin: 2005) 34.



Abb. 1. Raffael, *Der Borgobrand* (1515), Fresko, Basislänge ca. 770 cm, Rom, Vatikan, Stanza dell'Incendio.

und deutet an, dass auch diese Werke bei der Betrachtung ästhetischen Genuss hervorrufen.³

³ Vasari thematisiert den ästhetischen Genuss in seiner Ekphrasen von Giulio Romanos *Sala dei Giganti* und Palma il Vecchios *Sturm* stets auf einer Metaebene: obgleich er nie explizit schreibt, dass er ästhetischen Genuss bei der Betrachtung empfindet, soll diese ästhetische Erfahrung beim Leser durch die enthusiastische und evokative Nacherzählung der „erschütternden“ aber zugleich künstlerisch außerordentlichen Werke hervorgerufen werden. Das Konzept des ästhetischen Genusses spielte auch in der Kunsttheorie des Quattro- und Cinquecento eine bedeutsame Rolle. Aufgrund der vielfach rezipierten Ausführungen im vierten Kapitel von Aristoteles' *Poetik* sowie einzelner Passagen seiner *Rhetorik* war es allgemein bekannt, dass diese ästhetische Erfahrung keineswegs allein von schönen und gefälligen Dingen respektive Situationen ausgelöst wird, sondern auch von solchen, die schmerzvoll und unangenehm sind (so zum Beispiel Aristoteles, *Poetik*, übersetzt und hg. von M. Fuhrmann (Stuttgart: 1982) 11 (4. 1448 b 4–1)). An dieser Stelle muss betont werden, dass sich der ästhetische Genuss als eine elementare Form der ästhetischen Erfahrung vom einfachen Sinnengenuss unterscheidet, der als eine sinnlich unmittelbare Hingabe des Subjekts an ein Objekt definiert werden kann und nicht reflektiert ist. Die grundlegende Differenz zwischen ästhetischem Genuss, der auf das Engste mit der ästhetischen Distanz verknüpft ist, und Sinnengenuss besteht demzufolge in der Reflexivität des Ersteren. Dass auch die Darstellung von Schrecken, Leid und Hässlichem Wohlgefallen auslösen kann, hängt damit zusammen, dass das Subjekt in der Betrachtung von Kunstwerken erstens von den praktischen Interessen und emotionalen Verstrickungen des Lebens frei ist und zweitens Genuss am Prozess des Lernens und Erkennens empfindet. Zu Aristoteles Tracy H.L., „Aristotle on Aesthetic Pleasure“, *Classical Philology* 41, 1 (1946) 43–46. Zum ästhetischen Genuss in der Renaissance vgl. zum Beispiel Bätschmann O., „Kunstgenuss statt Bilderkult: Wirkung und Rezeption des Gemäldes nach Leon Battista



Abb. 2. Jacopo Palma il Vecchio (vollendet durch Paris Bordone), *Die Stadt Venedig wird durch ein Wunder der Heiligen Markus, Nikolaus und Georg vor einem Gewittersturm gerettet*, genannt *Der Sturm* (1527/28 bzw. 1534–1536), Öl auf Leinwand, 360 × 406 cm, Venedig, Gallerie dell'Accademia.

Stürme, Erdbeben, Vulkanausbrüche und Stadtbrände werden seit jeher als (katastrophische) Ereignisse wahrgenommen, die die vermeintlich sicheren Koordinaten des menschlichen Daseins radikal in Frage stellen. Schon antike und frühneuzeitliche Autoren nahmen von ihren bildnerischen beziehungsweise sprachlichen Repräsentationen an, sie würden beim Rezipienten zu einer intensiveren Regung der Affekte führen als beispielsweise die Darstellung schöner und harmonischer Landschaften

Alberti", in Blicke P. – Holenstein A. (Hgg.), *Macht und Ohnmacht der Bilder: reformatorischer Bildersturm im Kontext der europäischen Geschichte* (München: 2002) 359–375. Zum ästhetischen Genuss im Allgemeinen vgl. Jauß H.R., "Kleine Apologie der ästhetischen Erfahrung", in Stöhr J. (Hg.), *Ästhetische Erfahrung heute* (Köln: 1996) 52–58.

und assoziierten sie mit dem Erhabenen.⁴ Der Leser könne sich nicht mit den Kräften des Verstandes gegen das 'Erstaunliche' wehren, sondern werde 'durch diese unwiderstehliche Macht und Gewalt [...] überwältigt', wie es Longin⁵ in seiner Schrift *Peri Hýpsous* (*Vom Erhabenen*) formuliert.⁶

In seiner Beschreibung des *Borgobrands* greift Vasari bekanntlich auf die kunsttheoretischen Schriften Leon Battista Albertis zurück, insbesondere auf dessen *De pictura* (1435–36), in dem den 'Regungen der Seele' eine zentrale Rolle zukommt.⁷ Die Beharrlichkeit, mit welcher der Aretiner auf das furchtbare und zerstörerische Phänomen sowie die daraus resultierende Angst der Menschen eingeht, ist allerdings nur schwer mit Albertis Forderung an die Malerei in Einklang zu bringen, hauptsächlich 'entzückende' und 'anmutige' Bewegungen darzustellen, die die Seele des Betrachters zu positiven Empfindungen rühren.⁸ Wie im Folgenden gezeigt werden soll, scheint sich Vasari bei den oben genannten Werken statt für das mit dem Schönen verbundene *ethos* verstärkt für das mit dem Erhabenen assoziierte *pathos* zu interessieren, das den Rezipienten überwältigt und gleichzeitig ästhetisches Vergnügen auslöst. Damit drängt

⁴ Wie noch näher auszuführen ist, findet sich zum Beispiel bei Longin der Verweis, dass die Krater des Ätna den Menschen stärker affizieren als das vom Menschen entzündete Flämmchen. Der spätantike Autor geht auch ausführlich auf Homers gewaltvolle Schilderung von Seestürmen ein. Vgl. Longinus, *Vom Erhabenen*, hg. von O. Schönberger (Stuttgart: 2002) 33–35 und 87–89 (35.4). Ausgehend von der Lektüre Plinius', der in seinen Ekphraseis spektakuläre meteorologische Darstellungen beschreibt (Plinius, *Naturkunde*, lateinisch-deutsch, Buch XXXV, übersetzt und hg. von R. König (München: 1978) 72 und 73, XXXV.92), aber auch in der Auseinandersetzung mit Ghiberti, dem die malerische Darstellung von Dunkelheit, Unwetter, Erdbeben und Sturmwinden als Wunder erschien (Ghiberti L., *I Commentari*, hg. von O. Morisani (Neapel: 1947) 39, *Commentario* II, 11), findet sich auch bei Leonardo da Vinci der Hinweis, dass Berge und schreckliche Orte, den Betrachtern Angst und Schrecken einflößen und dass das Ziel der Malerei dann erreicht sei, wenn nicht nur Wohlgefallen, sondern auch Schrecken auf den Betrachter überspringen (Codex Atlanticus, Abschnitt 25). Vgl. Fehrenbach F., *Licht und Wasser. Zur Dynamik naturphilosophischer Leitbilder im Werk Leonardo da Vincis* (Tübingen: 1997), insbesondere Kapitel 5 "Die Sintflutzeichnungen", 291–332.

⁵ Der Verfasser des *Peri Hýpsous* ist nicht näher bekannt und wird im *Codex Parisinus Graecus* 2036 als Dionysios oder Pseudo-Longinos aber auch als Dionysios Pseudo-Longinos bezeichnet. Vgl. Schönberger O., "Nachwort zum Buch vom Erhabenen", in Longinus, *Vom Erhabenen* 135.

⁶ Longinus, *Vom Erhabenen* 5–7 (1.4).

⁷ Vgl. hierzu insbesondere Badt K., "Raphael's Incendio del Borgo", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 20 (1959) 35–59.

⁸ Alberti Leon Battista, *De Pictura – Die Malkunst*, hg. von O. Bätschmann (Darmstadt: 2000) 194–335, hier 277 (II.44).

sich die Frage auf, inwiefern Vasari in den erwähnten Passagen der *Vite* eine Ästhetik des Erhabenen thematisiert, deren vormoderne Formen nur spärlich untersucht worden sind.

Die Vasari-Forschung hat diesem Aspekt bislang keine Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet, was kaum überrascht, handelt es sich doch um wenige, wenn gleich ekphrastisch außergewöhnliche Passagen. Das mangelnde Interesse hängt aber sicherlich auch damit zusammen, dass man das Erhabene gerade in der Kunstgeschichte auf das Engste mit dem 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert verknüpft, in dem die Darstellung erhabener Naturereignisse zu einem zentralen Motiv der Kunst geworden war.⁹ Im Rahmen der frühneuzeitlichen Kunst(-geschichte) wird das Erhabene hingegen nur am Rande erwähnt. So wird darauf verwiesen, dass in Giulio Romanos *Sala dei Giganti* eine Ästhetik des Erhabenen anklinge, die in den zeitgenössischen Schilderungen auch betont werde. Der Unterschied zwischen Raffaels *grazia* und Michelangelos *terribilità* wird, zumindest andeutungsweise, ebenfalls mit den Diskussionen um das Schöne und Erhabene in Verbindung gebracht. Ob und in welcher Form der Diskurs über das Erhabene in Kunst und Kunsttheorie des Cinquecento überhaupt präsent ist, wurde bislang jedoch nicht zu Genüge analysiert.¹⁰

⁹ Zur Bedeutung des Erhabenen in der Kunst des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts siehe bspw. Begemann Ch., „Erhabene Natur. Zur Übertragung des Begriffs des Erhabenen auf Gegenstände der Natur in den deutschen Kunsttheorien des 18. Jahrhunderts“, *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaften und Geistesgeschichte* 58 (1958) 74–110; Busch W., „Das sublimale Feuer in der englischen Malerei des 18. Jahrhunderts“, in Busch B. (Hg.), *Feuer* (Köln: 2001) 133–148; Saint-Girons B. (Hg.), *Le paysage et la question du sublime*, Ausst.-Kat. Le Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Histoire Naturelle Valence 1997 (Paris: 1997); Twitchell J.B., *Romantic Horizons. Aspects of the Sublime in English Poetry and Painting (1770–1850)* (Columbia: 1983). Ferner Jakob M., „Das Erhabene und die Landschaft“, *Aevum antiquum* (2003 (2007)) 275–280. Aber auch Wilton A., *Turner and the Sublime*, Ausst.-Kat. National Gallery London 1980 (London: 1980).

¹⁰ Eine Ausnahme stellt Alessandro Nova dar, der sich unter anderem mit Leonards Interesse für erhabene Naturphänomene auseinandergesetzt hat. Vgl. Nova A., *Das Buch des Windes. Das Unsichtbare sichtbar machen* (München: 2007) 73–87 und 124. Ferner auch Fehrenbach, *Licht und Wasser* sowie Kanz R. *Die Kunst des Capriccio. Kreativer Eigensinn in Renaissance und Barock* (München-Berlin: 2002) 139–146. In seiner fundierten Analyse geht Kanz ausführlich auf Vasaris Begrifflichkeit, die Frage nach der Möglichkeit der ästhetischen Distanznahme sowie am Rande auch auf diejenige des Erhabenen ein. Zu Recht schreibt Kanz über Giulio Romanos *Sala dei Giganti*: 'Man könnte sagen, daß in nuce durch den Raumentwurf und die Disposition des Affektzonen solche Wirkungsmechanismen eingeführt werden, die erst zwei Jahrhunderte später in der Debatte um das Erhabene ihre vollgültige ästhetische Relevanz erlangen sollten.' Kanz, *Die Kunst des Capriccio* 144. Allerdings untersucht er nicht, inwiefern die Kategorie des Erhabenen in theoretischen Diskursen des Cinquecento präsent ist. Siehe dazu Anmerkung 56. Marc

Gerade die *terribilità*, die im 16. Jahrhundert ebenso wie das dazugehörige Adjektiv *terribile* einen Bedeutungswechsel hin zu etwas Positivem durchmachte, kann, wie Jan Bialostocki betont, als eine Vorstufe zum Erhabenen verstanden werden. Sowohl Bialostocki als auch David Summers weisen überzeugend nach, dass *terribilità* und *terribile* eine Übersetzung des griechischen *deinotes* (Schrecklichkeit) und *deinos* sind, die in der antiken Rhetorik mit Erhabenheit, Ausdruckskraft und Kunstfertigkeit verbunden wurden, Konnotationen, die auch Vasari insbesondere in bezug auf Person und Kunst Michelangelos verwendet. Baldine Saint-Girons wiederum hat in ihren zahlreichen Untersuchungen über das Erhabene die Verknüpfung zwischen *Deinotes* (Schrecklichkeit) und *Hýpsous* (Erhabenheit) herausgearbeitet.¹¹

Das *Perì Hýpsous* wird als der zentrale Referenztext für das Erhabene in der Frühen Neuzeit identifiziert.¹² Die Abhandlung des spätantiken Autors sowie ihre Rezeption zwischen 1540 und 1570 sind auch für diese Überlegungen relevant. Wie Saint-Girons dargelegt hat, liegt die Schwierigkeit, dieses Konzept zu fassen, bereits in seinen Anfängen begründet, nämlich in der Differenz der griechischen philosophischen und der römischen rhetorischen Tradition. Erstere versteht *Hýpsous* als Substantiv, das die Höhe und Elevation meint, und verbindet das Erhabene mit der Größe des Geistes. Letztere verwendet den Begriff *sublimis* in seiner adjektivischen Form und versteht ihn als Genus der rhetorischen Dreistillehre.¹³ Quintilian, der als erster den *Genus sublimis dicendi* mit dem erhabenen/

Fumaroli verweist am Rande seiner Studie auf den Gegensatz Raffael/Michelangelo, der möglicherweise etwas mit der Auseinandersetzung um das Schöne und Sublime zu tun habe. Fumaroli M., "Rhétorique d'école et rhétorique adulte. Remarques sur la réception européenne du traité *Du sublime* au XVI. et au XVII. siècle", *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 86, 1 (Le sublime) (1986) 33–51, hier 40.

¹¹ Da es in diesem Aufsatz um eine Analyse von Vasaris Beschreibung katastrophischer Darstellungen wie Bränden und Stürmen geht, wird seine Verwendung der Begriffe *terribilità* und *terribile* in der Michelangelo-Vita nicht näher untersucht. Siehe Bialostocki J., "Terribilità", *Stil und Überlieferung in der Kunst des Abendlandes*, Akten des 21. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte in Bonn 1964 (Berlin: 1967) 3. Bde., Bd. 3, *Theorien und Probleme*, 222–225. Ferner Summers D., *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton: 1981) 236. Grundlegend Saint-Girons B., *Le sublime de l'antiquité à nos jours* (Paris: 2005) 50–53; Id., *Fiat Lux. Une philosophie du sublime* (Paris: 1993) und Till D., *Das doppelte Erhabene. Eine Argumentationsfigur von der Antike bis zum Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: 2006). Ebenso Pries Ch., "Einleitung", in id. (Hg.), *Das Erhabene. Zwischen Grenzerfahrung und Größenwahn* (Weinheim: 1989) 1–32.

¹² Till, *Das doppelte Erhabene* 6–12.

¹³ Saint-Girons, *Le sublime* 50–53; Id., *Fiat Lux*.

hohen Stil assoziierte, diene die heftige und gewaltsame Bewegung des Zuhörers zur Charakterisierung der Wirkung erhabener Rede.¹⁴ Longins *Perì Hýpsous* lässt sich nicht klar in einer der beiden Traditionen verorten. Im wesentlichen operiert der Autor mit Begriffen, die der rhetorischen Stillehre entstammen und setzt beim Leser Kenntnisse des stilistischen Instrumentariums voraus.¹⁵ Wie in der klassischen Philologie herausgearbeitet worden ist, knüpft Longin zwar an das rhetorische System an, durchbricht aber auch dessen Grenzen.¹⁶ Ohne an dieser Stelle näher auf literaturtheoretische Debatten eingehen zu können, sei darauf verwiesen, dass es auch heute noch eine „rhetorisierende“ Lesart Longins gibt, die seine Abhandlung auf die Erörterung einer bestimmten Formsprache reduziert, die gehobene Stilmittel bevorzugt. Dadurch wird das Potential des *Perì Hýpsous* nicht ausgeschöpft. Dort geht es in bedeutendem Maße um die Frage nach dem *ästhetischen Erlebnis* und der *ästhetischen Wirkung*, die ein literarisches Werk auslöst.¹⁷

Wie schwierig es ist, das *Perì Hýpsous* ausschließlich in Zusammenhang mit der rhetorischen Tradition interpretieren zu wollen, beweist die erstmalig von Longin vorgenommene Verbindung von Einfachheit und Erhabenheit, die eine der grundlegenden Innovationen in der Frühgeschichte des Erhabenen darstellt. Er führt den Ausspruch des Schöpfers '*Fiat lux*' in der Genesis (I, 3) als Beispiel des Erhabenen an und durchbricht somit die in der rhetorischen Stillehre vorherrschende Idee, das Einfache und das Erhabene müssten als Oppositionskonzepte aufgefasst werden.¹⁸ Augustinus betont diese Verbindung von *simplicitas*

¹⁴ Vgl. Saint-Girons, *Le sublime* 52. Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, *Institutionis oratoriae libri XII – Ausbildung des Redners. Zwölf Bücher*, übersetzt und hg. von H. Rahn (Darmstadt: 1972–1975) 755–788 (XII.10.59–61).

¹⁵ Wie Manfred Fuhrmann dargelegt hat, geht es in einem ersten Moment um die erhabenen Ausdrucksmittel und ihre konkrete Handhabung. Fuhrmann M., *Die Dichtungstheorie der Antike. Aristoteles, Horaz, Longin. Eine Einführung* (Düsseldorf-Zürich: 2003) 164–165.

¹⁶ Donald A. Russell schreibt in seinem Longin-Kommentar lakonisch: 'L's Hýpsos has nothing specially to do with grandiose diction [...] It is therefore, a special effect, not a special style.' Russell D.A., "Introduction", in *Pseudo-Longinus on the Sublime*, hg., komm. und engl. von D. A. Russell (Oxford: 1964) XXXVII.

¹⁷ Vgl. Calcante C. M., *Genera dicendi e retorica del sublime* (Pisa-Rom: 2000). Ferner Fricke H., *Gesetz und Freiheit. Eine Philosophie der Kunst* (München: 2000) 72 sowie Till, *Das doppelte Erhabene* 17–18.

¹⁸ Treffend schreibt Saint-Girons 'La révolution Pseudo-Longinienne consistera [...] dans la suppression de l'opposition traditionnelle entre simple et sublime, ou, plus exactement, dans la réhabilitation de la simplicité, non pas à côté du sublime, mais en son cœur même.' Saint-Girons, *Fiat lux* 232.

und *sublimitas* in seiner Theorie des *sermo humilis* ebenfalls, was zeigt, dass das Erhabene auch im Kontext der christlichen Theologie erörtert wurde.¹⁹ Darüber hinaus war es für die in der antiken Literatur topische Schilderung verheerender Unwetter – etwa in Lukrez' *De rerum natura* (VI, 424) – oder für die Evokation biblischer Katastrophen – wie die Sintflut oder das Jüngste Gericht (Augustinus, *Civitas Dei*, XX, 16–24) – von zentraler Bedeutung. Das Erhabene war somit nie vollkommen in Vergessenheit geraten. Dennoch hat die Wiederentdeckung des Longinschen Traktats im Cinquecento das Interesse an diesem Thema sowohl in poetologischen als auch in kunsttheoretischen Kreisen stark geschürt, was im Folgenden anhand der bereits erwähnten Schilderung von "Katastrophendarstellungen" in den Vasarianischen *Vite* dargelegt werden soll.

Mit dem *Perì Hýpsous* fand die Phase der Wiederentdeckung und Neu-edition der literaturästhetischen Theorien der griechischen und römischen Antike einen Abschluss.²⁰ Schon vor Francesco Robortellos *Editio princeps* von 1554 zirkulierte eine lateinische Übersetzung der Abhandlung. Dieses unveröffentlichte, in der Vatikanischen Bibliothek aufbewahrte Manuskript trägt den Titel *Dionysii Longini de altitudine et gravitate orationis*. Gustavo Costa hat sie Fulvio Orsini zugeschrieben und ihren Einfluss im Umkreis der Farnese zu Beginn des Cinquecento nachzuweisen versucht.²¹ Eine weitere Erwähnung fand der Autor des 'goldenen

¹⁹ Wie Augustinus in der *Doctrina christiana* anhand der Beredsamkeit des Propheten Amos und den Briefen des Apostels Paulus darlegt, passt die Sprache der Heiligen Schrift in kein Stilschema und schwankt zwischen höchster und einfachster Stillage. Je einfacher sich nun die Sprache darbietet, desto bewundernswerter erscheint die Paradoxie zwischen einfacher Form und erhabenem Gehalt. (*Doctrina christiana*, 2, 6, 7 und 2, 6, 8) Allerdings erfuhr das Erhabene im Mittelalter eine ambivalente Einschätzung. Erich Auerbach hat gezeigt, dass es in Zusammenhang mit der rhetorischen Eloquenz als beinahe teuflisches Element gedeutet wurde. Zum *Sermo humilis* siehe Auerbach E., *Literatursprache und Publikum in der lateinischen Spätantike und im Mittelalter*, (Bern: 1958), hier das Eingangskapitel "Sermo humilis". Ferner Bader E., *Rede-Rhetorik, Schreib-Rhetorik, Konversationsrhetorik. Eine historisch-systematische Analyse* (Freiburg: 1994) 94–110.

²⁰ Zur Rezeption Longins im Cinquecento siehe den Beitrag von Eugenio Refini in diesem Band. Grundlegend Weinberg B., "Translations and Commentaries of Pseudo-Longinus, On the Sublime, to 1600: a Bibliography", *Modern Philology* 47, 3 (1950) 145–151; Costa G., "Paolo Manuzio e lo Pseudo-Longino", *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 161 (1984) 60–77; Id., "The Latin Translations of Longinus' *Perì Hýpsous* in Renaissance Italy", in Schoeck R.J. (Hg.), *Acta conventus neo-latini Bononiensis. Proceedings of the 4th International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies* (Binghamton: 1985) 224–238. Ferner Ley K., "Das Erhabene als Element frühmoderner Bewußtseinsbildung. Zu den Anfängen der neuzeitlichen Longin-Rezeption in der Rhetorik und Poetik des Cinquecento", in Plett H. (Hg.), *Renaissance-Poetik/Renaissance Poetics* (Berlin – New York: 1994) 241–259, hier 241–242. Till, *Das doppelte Erhabene* 21.

²¹ Costa, "The Latin Translation".

Büchleins²² in der Einleitung zu dem 1548 erschienenen Kommentar der Aristotelischen *Rhetorik* des Florentiner Humanisten Pietro Vettori (1499–1585). Longin wurde von Vettori als großer Rhetor und – da Schüler Plotins – als Philosoph charakterisiert.²³ Sechs Jahre später sollte Robortello (1516–1567) die in Basel erschienene *Editio Princeps* des *Peri Hýpsous* betreuen. Diese gibt den griechischen Originaltext wieder, der nur noch durch eine einzige, in Paris aufbewahrte Handschrift überliefert ist.²⁴ 1555 wurde die Abhandlung von dem venezianischen Gelehrten und Verleger Paolo Manuzio (1512–1574) ein weiteres Mal herausgegeben. Wie Eugenio Refini betont, handelte es sich hierbei um eine Form von philologischem Wettstreit, der zu einer größeren Verbreitung und mehreren Übersetzungen des Textes führte. So entstand 1566 in Venedig eine lateinische Übersetzung, der 1575 eine erste in italienischer Sprache folgen sollte, die Giovanni di Niccolo da Falgano am Florentiner Hof von Francesco I. de' Medici verfasst hatte.²⁵

Die Wiederentdeckung und Herausgabe des Traktats ist in einem intellektuellen Umfeld anzusiedeln, in dem sich zwei von Vasaris engsten Freunden, nämlich Vincenzo Borghini (1515–1580) und Cosimo Bartoli (1503–1572) sowie der in den *Vite* mehrmals erwähnte Pietro Vettori bewegten.²⁶ Sie alle waren Mitglieder der berühmten, aus der *Accademia degli umidi* hervorgegangenen *Accademia Fiorentina*. Diese unter der Schirmherrschaft Cosimos I. stehende Institution widmete sich seit 1541 nicht nur der Förderung des Toskanischen, sondern auch der Übersetzung und Kommentierung griechischer und lateinischer Texte. Robortello, der

²² So bezeichnet Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614) Longins *Peri Hýpsous* in seiner Schrift *In Persii satiras liber commentarius*, zit. n. Brody J., *Boileau and Pseudo-Longinus* (Genf: 1958) 10.

²³ 'Pseudo-Longinus verò quidam magister dicendi magni nominis, Plotini auditor, affirmavit numerum hunc oratorium esse metri spiritum. Ut autem concentus.' Zitiert nach Ley, "Das Erhabene als Element" 241.

²⁴ Es handelt sich um den bereits erwähnten *Codex Parisinus Graecus* 2036. (Siehe Anm. 5).

²⁵ Weinberg, "Translations and Commentaries" 150. Refini, "Longinus and Poetic Imagination" in diesem Band.

²⁶ Der berühmte Humanist und Philologe Bartoli war ab den frühen 1560er Jahren Gesandter Cosimos I. in Venedig und verkehrte dort mit den bedeutendsten Persönlichkeiten der Lagunenstadt, zu denen auch Paolo Manuzio gehörte. Neben dem griechischen Original (1555) hatte Manuzio auch eine lateinische Übersetzung des *Peri Hýpsous* herausgegeben. Borghini wiederum war ein enger Freund und Schüler Vettori, der von Vasari in der Vita des Andrea del Sarto als 'hochgebildeter' Mensch bezeichnet wird und als einer der ersten auf Longin verwiesen hatte. Vgl. Vasari G., *Das Leben des Andrea del Sarto*, übersetzt von V. Lorini, hg., komm. und engl. von S. Feser (Berlin: 2005) 69. Zu Borghini vgl. Pozzi M., *Lingua e cultura del Cinquecento. Dolce, Aretino, Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Sarpi, Borghini* (Padua: 1975) 95.

ursprünglich aus Padua stammte, war in den späten vierziger und fünfziger Jahren des Cinquecento ebenfalls mit diesem mediceischen Umkreis assoziiert.²⁷ Vettori, ein langjähriger Freund Robortellos, besaß ein Exemplar von dessen Longin-Ausgabe, das er mit Anmerkungen versehen hatte und auf das er in den *Variarum lectionum libri XXXVIII* verweist (Florenz 1582, Buch 27, XIII, S. 331).²⁸ Vasari dürfte also zumindest aus zweiter Hand über diesen spätantiken Text informiert gewesen sein, auch wenn er weder in den *Vite* noch in den Briefwechseln erwähnt wird. Dies ist allerdings kaum erstaunlich, legt der Künstlerbiograph doch auch sonst keine seiner Inspirationsquellen offen. In diesem Zusammenhang ist es relevant, dass Borghini und Bartoli maßgeblichen Einfluss auf die zweite Edition der *Vite* genommen hatten, insbesondere auf die philosophischen und kunsttheoretischen Passagen. Obgleich nicht näher bestimmt werden kann, welche Textstellen die beiden Humanisten konkret überarbeitet oder vielleicht sogar selbst geschrieben haben, wird in der Vasariforschung seit längerem über die Frage der Autorschaft diskutiert.²⁹ Statt Vasari als alleinigen Autor der *Vite* anzunehmen, wird verstärkt seine Zusammenarbeit mit Florentiner Gelehrten betont.

In der philologischen Forschung herrscht jedoch Uneinigkeit hinsichtlich der Wirkung, die das *Peri Hýpsous* auf die rhetorischen und poetologischen Traktate der zweiten Hälfte des Cinquecento ausübte. So vertreten etwa Sophie Hache und Dietmar Till die Meinung, die Schrift sei kaum rezipiert worden, und wenn, dann hauptsächlich im Rahmen der Schulrhetorik, die Longins Abhandlung in die rhetorische Dreistillehre der Antike integrierte, und das Erhabene somit ausschließlich als eine Variante des hohen Stils interpretierte.³⁰ Marc Fumaroli, Klaus Ley, Baldine

²⁷ Robortello war Professor für Rhetorik und Philosophie an der Universität in Pisa, die 1543 im Zuge von Cosimo de' Medicis vielfältigen kulturpolitischen Aktivitäten wieder eröffnet worden war, und Verfasser des ersten Kommentars der Aristotelischen Poetik, den *In librum Aristotelis de arte poetica explicationes*. Die *Explicationes* wurden bei dem seit April 1547 als Hofdrucker der Medici tätigen Lorenzo Torrentino veröffentlicht und waren Cosimo I. de' Medici gewidmet. Vgl. Plaisance M., *L'Académie et le prince. Culture et politique à Florence au temps de Côme I^{er} et de François de Médicis* (Rom: 2004) 271–273.

²⁸ Vgl. Pozzi, *Lingua e cultura* 95.

²⁹ Grundlegend die Schriften von Charles Hope wie zum Beispiel: "Le 'Vite' vasariane: un esempio di autore multiplo", in Santoni A. (Hg.), *L'autore multiplo* (Pisa: 2005) 59–74.

³⁰ Nach Till folgen alle Ausgaben und Übersetzungen des 16. Jahrhunderts einer 'rhetorisierenden' Interpretation des *Peri Hýpsous*, in der die innovativen Elemente der Schrift nicht zur Kenntnis genommen werden. Dies würde damit zusammenhängen, dass Rhetorik und Poetik in der Frühen Neuzeit in den normativen Kontext von Schule und Universität eingebunden gewesen seien. Zudem müsse das rhetorische System als statisch

Saint-Girons und Eugenio Refini betonen hingegen, das *Perì Hýpsous* sei gerade in den fünfziger und sechziger Jahren wichtig für poetologische aber auch kunsttheoretische Diskussionen gewesen, selbst wenn die Auseinandersetzung mit Longins Schrift ausschließlich auf höchstem theoretischen Niveau stattgefunden hätte.³¹ Der Traktat sei insbesondere dann zur Sprache gekommen, wenn es im Rahmen der platonisierenden Poetik um den *Furor poeticus* ging.³² Nach Ley und Saint-Girons hatte schon Robortello erkannt, dass Longin zwar auch Fragen der Rhetorik – insbesondere des hohen Stils – berührt, die Intention des spätantiken Autors jedoch darin liegt, das Erhabene nicht so sehr als rhetorische Technik, denn als Größe der Gedanken zu fassen. Robortello, der am Problem des poetischen Vergnügens interessiert war, konnte durch das *Perì Hýpsous* seine Wirkungs-poetik stärker ausbauen, die ausgehend von der aristotelischen Poetik die Mimesistheorie und die Katharsislehre als zentrale Elemente beinhaltet, und exemplarisch zeigen, wie sehr die Dichtung und die Kunst auf das Staunen sowie die Erfahrung des Unbegreiflichen und Nicht-Darstellbaren zielen.³³ Durch die Autorität Longins ergab sich im Cinquecento demzufolge die Möglichkeit, das sich von der Regel abwendende, geistreich Ungewöhnliche in das Dichtungs- und Sprachkonzept mit einzubeziehen und somit eine größere poetische Freiheit zu erlangen, die im Gegensatz zu dem im Bembo-Umkreis vertretenen Klassizismus stand. Auch wenn Tills Behauptung, Longin sei bis ins 17. Jahrhundert kein 'klassierter' Autor gewesen und seine Schrift habe nicht systembildend gewirkt, richtig ist, lässt sich also dennoch eine Rezeptionslinie ausmachen, in der der spätantike Autor überaus wirkungsmächtig war.³⁴

und kaum wandlungsfähig beschrieben werden. Till, *Das doppelte Erhabene* 23, 28 und 30. Ferner Hache S., *La langue du ciel. Le sublime en France au XVII. Siècle* (Paris: 2000).

³¹ So schreibt etwa Refini in diesem Band: 'Nevertheless, the notion of the sublime as conceived by Longinus seems to leave a mark in the debate on poetry'. Die Autoren gehen jedoch nicht näher auf den möglichen Einfluß des *Perì Hýpsous* auf die Kunsttheorie ein. Siehe Fumaroli M., "Rhétorique d'école". Ferner Ley, "Das Erhabene als Element", Saint-Girons, *Le sublime* und Refini, "Longinus and Poetic Imagination" in diesem Band.

³² Vgl. etwa die Hinweise auf die Wirkungsgeschichte der platonischen Inspirationslehre bei Hathaway B., *The Age of Criticism: The Late Renaissance in Italy* (Ithaca – New York: 1962) 341.

³³ Auch Longins produktionsästhetische Überlegungen zur künstlerischen Inspiration, die in offensichtlicher Anlehnung an Platons im *Phaidros* entwickelte Mania-Konzeption und an die Frage nach dem *enthusiasmos* des Dichters entstanden sind (platonische *Furor poeticus*-Lehre), spielten eine bedeutende Rolle für Robortellos eigene Poetik. Vgl. Ley, "Das Erhabene als Element" 243 und 245.

³⁴ So spielte Longins Abhandlung – insbesondere deren wirkungsästhetische Implikationen – eine zentrale Rolle für das 1586 erschienene Werk *Della Poetica* des Francesco Patrizi, einem Schüler Robortellos. Siehe Buck A., *Italienische Dichtungslehren vom Mittelalter bis zum Ausgang der Renaissance* (Tübingen: 1952) 34. Ferner Weinberg B.,

Man kann nun die kritische Frage stellen, ob poetologische beziehungsweise philosophisch-ästhetische Debatten für Vasaris *Vite* relevant gewesen sind und wenn ja, weshalb gerade neuplatonisch gefärbtes Gedankengut besonders prägend hätte sein sollen. Vasaris Kunsttheorie ist erwiesenermaßen durch einen äußerst eklektischen Charakter gekennzeichnet, in dem unterschiedliche, sich häufig konträr zueinander verhaltende philosophische Einflüsse zu finden sind. Als Beispiel für seinen „freien“ Umgang mit den philosophischen Quellen genügt ein Verweis auf den *disegno*-Begriff, in dem neuplatonische und aristotelische Elemente zu einem neuen, nur schwer interpretierbaren Ganzen zusammengefügt werden.³⁵

Anhand einiger Passagen aus der Raffael-Vita lässt sich besonders gut aufzeigen, wie stark sich Vasari von rhetorischen und poetologischen Diskursen inspirieren ließ, die er sicherlich durch Bartoli und Borghini kannte. Die zum 'Wohle der heutigen Künstler' verfasste Beschreibung von Raffaels stilistischer Entwicklung bedient sich eines literaturkritischen Vokabulars, das hauptsächlich auf die *imitatio*-Debatte zurückgeht.³⁶ Die Grundzüge dieser Diskussion wurden zu Beginn des 16. Jahrhunderts im später *De imitatione* genannten Briefwechsel zwischen Kardinal Pietro Bembo und Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola formuliert, dem Neffen des berühmten Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Die Ausgangsfrage lautete, ob die Schriftsteller ihren Stil durch die Nachahmung eines einzigen oder mehrerer Autoren verbessern sollten.

In Vasaris Beschreibung von Raffaels stilistischer Entwicklung und dessen Suche nach einem persönlichen Stil sind diese Bezüge zur *imitatio*-Debatte nicht zu überhören. In der 1568er-Ausgabe insistiert der Autor in mehreren Hinsichten auf Raffaels „bembistische Methode“, flicht jedoch auch theoretische Gedanken ein, die eindeutig an Picos neuplatonisch ausgerichtete Methode der poetischen *imitatio* erinnern, in der der persönlichen Inspiration eine zentrale Rolle zukommt.³⁷ Es ist demzufolge durchaus plausibel, dass Vasari auf theoretische Vorstellungen Robortel-

A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance 1 (Chicago: 1961) 785 und Ley, „Das Erhabene als Element“ 244.

³⁵ Zu einer Analyse von Vasaris *disegno*-Begriff siehe insbesondere Kemp W., „Disegno: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Begriffs zwischen 1547 und 1607“, *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 19 (1974) 219–240; Williams R., *Art, Theory, and Culture in Sixteenth Century Italy. From Techne to Metatechne* (Cambridge: 1997); Bambach C.C., *Drawing and painting in the Italian Renaissance workshop: theory and practice, 1300–1600* (Cambridge: 1999); Rosand D., *Drawing Acts. Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation* (Cambridge: 2001).

³⁶ Vasari, *Raffael* 77.

³⁷ Vasari hebt Raffaels langes Studium der alten Meister hervor und betont, wie beschwerlich für diesen das Erlangen des eigenen Stils gewesen sei. Dies geschieht in Anlehnung an Bembos Schilderung seiner persönlichen literarischen Entwicklung, die

los und indirekt oder direkt auch auf Longins Konzept des Erhabenen zurückgreift, wenn es in den *Vite* um eine Thematisierung des Schrecklichen und Undarstellbaren geht in deren Zentrum wirkungsästhetische Aspekte stehen.

Doch wenden wir uns kurz dem *Peri Hýpsous* zu. Ein Blick in die Schrift zeigt, dass Longin gleich zu Beginn seiner Abhandlung versucht, die emotiven Wirkungen des Erhabenen auf den Rezipienten näher zu bestimmen. Gegenübergestellt werden hierbei das Schöne, das gefällt, und das Erhabene, das durch Macht und Gewalt mitreißt.³⁸

Das Großartige nämlich überzeugt die Hörer nicht, sondern verückt sie; immer und überall wirkt ja das Erstaunliche mit seiner erschütternden Kraft mächtiger als das, was nur überredet oder gefällt, hängt doch die Wirkung des Überzeugenden meist von uns ab, während das Großartige unwiderstehliche Macht und Gewalt ausübt und jeglichen Hörer überwältigt.³⁹

Der pathetischen Kraft des Erstaunens und Erschütterns kann sich der Zuhörer nach Longin nicht entziehen: zu stark werden seine Affekte berührt, denn 'das Erhabene zerteilt, wo es am rechten Ort hervorbricht, den ganzen Stoff wie ein plötzlich zuckender Blitz.'⁴⁰ Dem Autor geht es an dieser Stelle um das zweigliedrige Dispositionsschema schöner und erhabener Rede. Diese Dichotomie wird im Verlauf seiner Abhandlung anhand von zwei Landschaftstypen visualisiert: Dem *locus amoenus* stellt sich eine imponierende und grenzenlose Natur entgegen, die die Bewunderung des Rezipienten hervorruft.

Daher bewundern wir aus einem natürlichen Trieb wahrhaftig nicht die kleinen Bäche wenn sie auch klar und nützlich sind, sondern den Nil, die Donau oder den Rhein, und viel mehr noch den Ozean. Auch das Flämmchen hier, das wir auf Erden entfacht haben, bewundern wir deshalb, weil es sein Licht rein bewahrt, nicht mehr als jene Himmelslichter, die sich häufig verdunkeln, noch halten wir es für staunenswerter als die Krater des Ätnas [...]. Doch wird man bei all diesem sagen, dass für die Menschen das

mit großer geistiger Anstrengung sowie stetigem Studium verbunden war. Indem der Aretiner schreibt, Raffael habe sich eines 'modo mezzano di fare' bedient, lässt er *Bembos mediocre stato* anklingen, den letzterer bei Petrarca bewundert und für nachahmenswert befunden hatte. Williams R., *Vincenzo Borghini and Vasari's Lives* (Princeton: 1988) 161–195.

³⁸ Vgl. Fuhrmann M., *Dichtungstheorie* 166 oder auch Zelle C., "Schönheit und Erhabenheit. Der Anfang doppelter Ästhetik bei Boileau, Dennis, Bodmer und Breitingen", in Pries, *Das Erhabene* 62.

³⁹ Longinus, *Vom Erhabenen* 7 (1.4).

⁴⁰ Longinus, *Vom Erhabenen* 7 (1.5).

Nützliche und Nötige leicht zu erwerben ist, immer jedoch das Außerordentliche bewundernswert bleibt.⁴¹

Das Erhabene befriedigt also das Verlangen des Menschen nach dem Großen, Unbegrenzten und somit auch nur schwer Ausdrückbaren und führt ihn letztlich zu Ekstase und Enthusiasmus. Fehrenbach hat dargelegt, dass man den Gegensatz zwischen der übergewaltigen und der gefälligen Rede auch in der rhetorischen Antithetik von *ethos* und *pathos* findet, wie sie zum Beispiel von Quintilian thematisiert wird. 'Commoveere' ist hier 'movere vehementius', heftige rhetorische Bewegung der Zuhörer. Der Bereich des *pathos* ist durch ein Übermaß von Bewegung und Erregung charakterisiert, dem 'am anderen Ende die Beruhigung und Mäßigung des ordnungsnahen *ethos*' gegenübersteht.⁴²

Die Antithetik von *ethos* und *pathos* spielt auch in Albertis Schriften eine beträchtliche Rolle. Es ist bezeichnend, dass Alberti, der mit rhetorischen Theorien wohl vertraut war, in seinem *De pictura* zwar eine Wirkungsästhetik propagiert, es jedoch bevorzugt, wenn in der Malerei die Dimension des *ethos* stärker betont wird. Albertis Ideal der auf den Betrachter überspringenden *actio* kommt in der berühmten Passage aus dem zweiten Buch am Besten zur Geltung: 'Ferner wird eine *historia* die Seelen der Betrachter dann bewegen, wenn die gemalten Menschen, die auf dem Bild zu sehen sind, ihre eigenen Seelenregungen ganz deutlich zu erkennen geben.'⁴³ Er beeilt sich allerdings hervorzuheben, dass es für die Malerei geziemlicher sei, das Entzückende und Harmonische zu zeigen.⁴⁴ Diese Präferenz für die Darstellung harmonischer, gefälliger Gefühle, die letztlich zu einer moralischen Verbesserung des Betrachters führen sollen, ist auf das Engste mit Albertis Theorie des Schönen verwoben, der zufolge dieses beim Betrachter Anziehung, Wohlgefallen und Bewunderung auslöst und beschwichtigend wirkt.⁴⁵ Im Kunstwerk müssen hierbei die einzelnen Teile zu einem in sich harmonischen und nachvollziehbaren Ganzen zusammengefügt werden, so dass es durch seine Schönheit die Seele des Betrachters affiziert und Wohlgefallen, ja

⁴¹ Longinus, *Vom Erhabenen* 88–89 (35.4).

⁴² Vgl. Fehrenbach, *Licht und Wasser* 291–332; Quintilianus, *Institutionis oratoriae* 703 (VI.2.12).

⁴³ Alberti, *De pictura* 269 (II.41). Im Gegensatz zu der zitierten Ausgabe, in der *historia* mit Vorgang übersetzt wird, hat die Verfasserin *historia* als *terminus technicus* belassen.

⁴⁴ Alberti, *De pictura* 276–277 (II.44f.).

⁴⁵ Zur Verbindung mit der *Concinnitas*-Ästhetik siehe Michels N., *Bewegung zwischen Ethos und Pathos. Zur Wirkungsästhetik italienischer Kunsttheorie des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts* (Münster: 1988) 12–20.

gar Liebe hervorruft.⁴⁶ Das Erhabene hingegen stellt eine Gefahr für die von Alberti in allen Bereichen geforderte *harmonia* und *concordia* dar. Im Gegensatz zum Schönen ist es enorm und somit jenseits der klaren Form, es übermannt den Betrachter und nimmt ihm die sicheren Koordinaten, den geordneten Raum, in dem er sich bewegt.

Auf diese Aspekte des Übermanntwerdens geht Vasari in seiner Beschreibung von Giulio Romanos *Sala dei Giganti* ein. In dieser stellt der Raffael-Schüler die Ovid entnommene Niederschlagung der Revolte der Titanen gegen die Götter dar.⁴⁷ Vasari hatte Mantua bereits 1541 besucht und war dort von Giulio Romano persönlich durch den Palazzo Te geführt worden. Zusammen mit Michelangelos Sixtinischer Decke widmet Vasari Giulio Romanos Meisterwerk, das er zwei Mal persönlich besichtigt hatte, die ausführlichste Schilderung innerhalb der gesamten *Vite*.⁴⁸ Das Ineinandergreifen von Architektur, dekorativen Elementen – wie dem heute nicht mehr erhaltenen Bodenbelag aus ‘willkürlich behauenen Steinen’ – und illusionistischer Malerei, die den ganzen Raum ohne jegliche einteilende Rahmung zu einem koordinatenlosen Kontinuum werden lassen, wird von Vasari evokativ heraufbeschworen, wobei er gezielt Begriffe wie ‘Angst’, ‘Furcht’ und ‘Schrecken’ benutzt [Abb. 3].⁴⁹ Sein Interesse gilt weniger einer akkuraten Erörterung der mythologischen Aspekte der Szene, als vielmehr der Darstellung des ‘katastrophischen’ Ereignisses. Nach der Beschreibung des Geschehens, in dem man nicht nur sieht wie ‘der zürnende Jupiter die hochmütigen Titanen mit Blitzen strafft’ und Stürme, Blitze und Feuersbrunst über die Giganten einbrechen, die ‘von den einstürzenden Bergen und Gebäuden verschüttet’ werden, sondern

⁴⁶ Zum Begriff des Schönen in der Renaissance siehe Leinkauf Th., “Der Begriff des Schönen im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert”, in Plett H.F. (Hg.), *Renaissance-Poetik/Renaissance Poetics* (Berlin – New York: 1994) 53–74.

⁴⁷ Zur *Sala dei Giganti* siehe die Studien von Guthmüller B., “Ovidübersetzungen und mythologische Malerei. Bemerkungen zur Sala dei Giganti Giulio Romanos”, *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 21 (1977) 35–68; Verheyen E., *The Palazzo del Te in Mantua. Images of Love and Politics* (Baltimore – London: 1977) 26–28; Shearman J., *Only connect... Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: 1992) 189–191; Carabell P., “Breaking the Frame: Transgression and Transformation in Giulio Romano's Sala dei Giganti”, *artibus et historiae* 18 (1997) 88–100; Vetter A.W., *Gigantensturz-Darstellungen in der italienischen Kunst. Zur Instrumentalisierung eines mythologischen Bildsujets im historisch-politischen Kontext* (Weimar: 2002) 43–99; Kanz, *Kunst des Capriccio* 139–141; Kliemann J. – Rohlmann M., *Wandmalerei in Italien. Die Zeit der Hochrenaissance und des Manierismus 1510–1600* (München: 2004) 294–315.

⁴⁸ Vasari, *Giulio Romano* 34–38.

⁴⁹ Vasari, *Giulio Romano* 34–38.



Abb. 3. Giulio Romano, *La Sala dei Giganti* (1531–1534), Fresko, Mantua, Palazzo del Te.

auch wie sich die Götter angsterfüllt ‘von diesem entsetzlichen Schrecken und der Raserei entfernen’,⁵⁰ setzt Vasari zu einer längeren wirkungsästhetischen Passage an:

Darum sollte niemand glauben, ein mit dem Pinsel geschaffenes Werk zu Gesicht zu bekommen, das zugleich entsetzlicher, erschütternder und naturgetreuer ist als dieses. Wer dieses Zimmer betritt und sieht, wie die Fenster, die Türen und anderen Elemente sich krümmen und fast einstürzen und

⁵⁰ Vasari, *Giulio Romano* 36.

wie die Berge auf die Bauten fallen, kann nichts anderes, als zu befürchten, daß alles über ihn hereinbrechen wird.⁵¹

Während Vasari zu Beginn hauptsächlich auf die von Giulio Romano variationsreich dargestellten Affekte wie Angst und Schrecken hinweist, geht er an dieser Stelle noch einen Schritt weiter. Der Betrachter wird eben nicht mehr durch dargestellte Affekte emotionalisiert, wie es Alberti fordert, sondern durch die Repräsentation des katastrophischen Ereignisses an sich. Dieses wird vom Künstler so virtuos und wirklichkeitsgetreu inszeniert, dass es dem Betrachter scheint, als wäre er dem Spektakel, in dessen Mitte er sich befindet, komplett ausgeliefert.

Hält man sich kurz vor Augen, was nach Longin zu den Spezifika des Erhabenen gehört, wird offensichtlich, dass an dieser Stelle auf eine Ästhetik des Erhabenen angespielt wird. Im Gegensatz zum Schönen, bei dem der Rezipient laut Longin selbstständig entscheidet, wie stark er sich affizieren lässt, ist es für das Erhabene, das erstaunt und erschüttert, charakteristisch, dass der Rezipient vollkommen übermannt wird. Es ist ein überwältigendes Ereignis, ein *raptus*, der die Möglichkeit der Distanznahme – zumindest in einem ersten Moment – gar nicht ermöglicht. Das Erhabene löst aber dennoch einen größeren Genuss aus als das Schöne. Die Antithetik zwischen einer Ästhetik des Schönen und einer Ästhetik des Schreckens implizit zum Fokus der Beschreibung der *Sala dei Giganti* werden zu lassen, bietet sich auch aufgrund des weiteren zentralen Saales des Palazzo Te an, in der Giulio Romano Szenen aus dem Leben der Psyche freskiert hat. Jenseits der Tatsache, dass Vasari natürlich aufgrund des Themas selbst kontinuierlich Begriffe wie 'Anmut', 'Liebe' und 'Schönheit' verwendet, ist es bemerkenswert, wie stark er in seiner Beschreibung der *Sala di Psiche* auf Rahmung, Unterteilung und Ordnung der dargestellten Szenen verweist. Dies steht in gewolltem Kontrast zu dem, was 'das Wunderbare an diesem Werk [Der Sala dei Giganti, H.G.] ist, in dem man 'weder Anfang noch Ende sieht, es im Ganzen zusammenhängt und sich ohne zierende Abschlüsse oder Unterteilungen so gut fortsetzt, daß die Dinge nahe den Gebäuden riesig erscheinen und die fern sich dort, wo die Landschaft ist, im Unendlichen verlieren.'⁵² Die *Sala dei Giganti*, die, wie Vasari betont, 'riesig' wirkt – der Begriff 'enorme' taucht im italienischen Original zweimal auf –, in der 'die ganze Welt auf dem Kopf steht'

⁵¹ Vasari, *Giulio Romano* 37.

⁵² Vasari, *Giulio Romano* 36.

und selbst die Türen und Fenster aus den Fugen zu geraten scheinen,⁵³ repräsentiert somit das genaue Gegenteil von Albertis *finestra aperta*, in der die Bildwelt immer ein gerahmtes und regelhaftes Ganzes ist, vor dem sich der Betrachter positioniert. In Albertis Konzeption der Malerei als Fenster wird der Raum als etwas Wohldefiniertes verstanden und stets die Existenz irgendeiner Art von Begrenzung des Bildrandes angenommen, die das Bild von der Sphäre des Betrachters trennt. Die Idee des Bildes als Fenster ist unauflöslich mit der Zentralperspektive verbunden, in der das Auge des Betrachters mit den Fluchtpunkten des Bildes übereinstimmen muss. Dadurch hat der Betrachter sozusagen den einen richtigen und privilegierten Standpunkt, der es ihm ermöglicht, die Bildwelt vor ihm mit einem Blick zu kontrollieren.⁵⁴

Laut Vasari sieht sich der Betrachter in der *Sala dei Giganti* mit einer ganz anderen Situation konfrontiert. Er befindet sich in einem ungebrochenen Kontinuum, das aufgrund seiner extremen Wirkung auch das körperliche Gleichgewicht des Besuchers in Frage stellt und ihm die Möglichkeit nimmt, die eine privilegierte Perspektive einzunehmen, durch die er das Geschehen kontrollieren könnte. Statt dessen wird er vom Chaos einer auf dem Kopf stehenden Welt überwältigt [Abb. 4, Detail]. Vasari verweist aber auch subtil auf die Möglichkeit einer Distanznahme, die sich einzig im Bereich des Ästhetischen aktualisieren kann. Während 'jede Gottheit mit ihrem Wagen zur Flucht' ansetzt und auch der Mond mit Saturn und Janus auf die hellste Stelle der Wolken zusteuert, 'um sich von diesem entsetzlichen Schrecken und der Raserei zu entfernen', bleiben einzig die für die *Ars* stehende Pallas Athene und die den Künstler inspirierenden Musen unberührt: Alles wird ins Chaos gestürzt, während 'Pallas mit den neun Musen das schreckliche Schauspiel betrachtet' [Abb. 5, Detail].⁵⁵ Es scheint, als ob Pallas Athene und die Musen bildintern

⁵³ Vasari, *Giulio Romano* 37.

⁵⁴ Vgl. hierzu den vorzüglichen Aufsatz von Carabbel, "Breaking the Frame" 90. Diesen Aspekt des Kontrollierens der (Bild-)Welt durch die Zentralperspektive, in der jedem Ding sein fixer Platz im bildnerischen Raumgefüge zugewiesen wird, kritisiert auch Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Das perspektivische Bild, also Albertis *finestra aperta*, erfordert, dass der Betrachter nicht in, sondern vor der Welt steht. Auch wenn Merleau-Ponty darauf verweist, dass die Renaissancekünstler sich darüber im klaren waren, dass 'keine Technik der Perspektive eine exakte Lösung bietet', dient ihm die Zentralperspektive dennoch als Beispiel für das Bemühen (der Wissenschaften), die Welt zu beherrschen. Gerade das Erhabene stellt aber die Möglichkeit einer Beherrschung der Welt gänzlich in Frage. Vgl. Merleau-Ponty M., "Das Auge und der Geist", in Id., *Das Auge und der Geist. Philosophische Essays* (Hamburg: 1984) 13–44. Hier 25–28.

⁵⁵ Vasari, *Giulio Romano* 36.



Abb. 4. Giulio Romano, *La Sala dei Giganti* (1531–1534), Fresko, Mantua, Palazzo del Te, Detail Nordwand.

Zeugenschaft ablegen und durch ihre Unberührtheit auf die Fiktionalität des katastrophischen Geschehens hinweisen würden, wodurch sie den subjektiven Eindruck des Überwältigtwerdens des Betrachters konterkarieren, ein Aspekt, den auch Kanz betont. Vasari kann also dahingehend interpretiert werden, dass allein die Kunst es ermöglicht, das Ungeheuerliche und Erschütternde mit Distanz zu betrachten, selbst wenn man ein



Abb. 5. Giulio Romano, *La Sala dei Giganti* (1531–1534), Fresko, Mantua, Palazzo del Te, Detail Gewölbe.

direkter Teil des Spektakels ist, und es somit als ästhetisches Phänomen zu reflektieren und zu genießen.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Vgl. hierzu auch Anmerkung 3, in der näher auf den ästhetischen Genuss eingegangen wird. Kanz, der die wirkungs- und rezeptionsästhetischen Aspekte sowohl der Sala dei Giganti als auch der vasarianischen Ekphrasis deutlich herausarbeitet, argumentiert, dass das 'Bewusstwerden der Zuschauerrolle' mit dem Konzept der Katharsis verbunden sei,

Die Aussage, man dürfe nicht glauben ein anderes 'mit dem Pinsel geschaffenes Werk zu Gesicht zu bekommen, das zugleich entsetzlicher, erschütternder und naturgetreuer ist als dieses', zeigt, dass Vasari die *Sala dei Giganti* als Meisterwerk des Künstlers verstand. Durch die Verwendung der Begriffe *terribile* und *orribile* wird also nicht nur auf das Werk und seine Wirkung bezug genommen, sondern auch auf die Kunstfertigkeit des Künstlers. Giulio Romano hat die mimetischen Qualitäten der Kunst so weit getrieben, um selbst etwas, das sich aufgrund seiner Gewaltigkeit eigentlich der Darstellbarkeit zu entziehen scheint, perfekt wiederzugeben.⁵⁷ Der Topos der Undarstellbarkeit geht schon auf Plinius den Älteren zurück, für den Apelles der unübertroffene Meister in der Darstellung spektakulärer Naturereignisse war. Apelles vermochte auch das Undarstellbare zu malen, nämlich Donner, Wetterleuchten und Blitze, ja in seinen Gemälden schien es, als würde der Blitz außerhalb des Gemäldes zucken.⁵⁸ Sowohl Plinius als auch Philostrat verstehen Werke, in denen schwer darstellbare Naturphänomene eingefangen werden, als Bravourstücke der Künstler, die die Grenzen zwischen Realität und Fiktion in Frage stellen.⁵⁹

Dass Vasari sowohl den *paragone* mit der Natur als auch denjenigen mit der Antike stets vor Augen hatte, wird in der Raffael-Vita deutlich. Der Topos der *imitatio* beziehungsweise der *superatio*, der Überbietung der Natur durch die Farbe, ist ein Leitmotiv dieser Lebensbeschreibung. Raffael ist hier – wie auch schon im *Proemio della terza parte delle Vite* – das erste Beispiel eines Künstlers, der die Natur nicht nur nachgeahmt, sondern sogar überboten hat. Vasari gesteht ihm überdies zu, der Malerei die Vollkommenheit, die sie bei Apelles und Zeuxis besaß, zurückgegeben und letztere gar übertroffen zu haben.⁶⁰ Der Wettstreit mit Apelles wird in der

das im 16. Jahrhundert aufgrund der intensiven Rezeption von Aristoteles' *Poetik* zentral war, wobei später auch die *maraviglia* eine wichtige Rolle spielte. Allerdings geht er an keiner Stelle auf Longins Schrift und deren Rezeption im Cinquecento ein und dies obgleich er kurz auf das Erhabene verweist. Gerade angesichts der Tatsache, dass die starke affektive Erregungen des Rezipienten durch überwältigende Werke thematisiert wird, scheint mir der Verweis auf Longin und das Erhabene jedoch grundlegend. Kanz, *Kunst des Capriccio* 144–146.

⁵⁷ Vasari, *Giulio Romano* 36 und Summers, *Language of Art* 236.

⁵⁸ Plinius, *Naturkunde* 72 und 73 (XXXV.92).

⁵⁹ Vgl. zum Beispiel Philostrats *Eikones* I, 1 oder II, 13. Philostratos, *Die Bilder – Eikones*, übersetzt, hg. und erläutert von Otto Schönberger (München: 1968) 88–89 und 208–209.

⁶⁰ '[...] all dies zusammenführend, bereicherte er die Kunst der Malerei um jene vollendete Perfektion, die in früheren Zeiten die Figuren des Apelles und des Zeuxis

Raffael-Vita an mehreren Stellen angedeutet, vor allem wenn es um die Darstellung schwer darstellbarer Phänomene geht, wie zum Beispiel Licht und Dunkelheit beziehungsweise Feuer. So findet sich in Vasaris Beschreibung von Raffaels Fresko mit der *Befreiung des Petrus aus dem Kerker* der Hinweis, dass kein Künstler jemals eine dermaßen große Begabung in der Darstellung von Spiegelungen und nächtlichen Szenarien besessen habe wie Raffael.⁶¹ Vasari dürfte an dieser Stelle eine Passage aus Baldassare Castigliones *Il Cortegiano* (1528) vor Augen gehabt haben, in der dieser in offensichtlichem Rekurs auf Plinius und bezeichnenderweise in Verteidigung Raffaels und der Malerei schreibt, dass es ihr im Gegensatz zur Bildhauerei gelänge, das Glänzen der Rüstungen, eine dunkle Nacht, einen Seesturm, Blitze oder das Brennen einer Stadt darzustellen.⁶² Diese Aspekte müssen berücksichtigt werden, um die verschiedenen Subtexte, subtilen Andeutungen und unterschiedlichen Formen des *paragone* zu verstehen, die in der Ekphrasis des *Borgobrandes* [Abb. 1] angesprochen werden.⁶³

Obgleich Raffael der Darstellung des schrecklichen Brandes, der den römischen Stadtteil Borgo zu vernichten droht, im Fresko einen relativ geringen Platz einräumt – so ist lediglich an der äußersten linken Ecke zu sehen, wie die vor dem nächtlichen Himmel lodernden Flammen einen Häuserkomplex zerfressen –, ist Vasari besonders bemüht, die furchteinflößende Feuersbrunst vor dem inneren Auge des Lesers zu evozieren. Selbst wenn er in seiner Ekphrasis nicht auf die phänomenale Qualität des

auszeichnete und noch um einiges mehr, wenn dies überhaupt gesagt werden kann oder es möglich wäre, ihre Werke zum Vergleich zu zeigen. Sogar die Natur wurde von seinen Farben besiegt und seine Erfindungsgabe war so ungezwungen und originell, wie wohl jeder urteilen wird, der seine gemalten Geschichten sieht.' Vasari G., "Vorrede des dritten Teils der *Vite*", hg., komm. und engl. von M. Burioni, in Vasari G., *Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttheorie. Eine Einführung in die Lebensbeschreibungen berühmter Künstler*, hg. von S. Feser und M. Burioni (Berlin: 2004).

⁶¹ 'Hier sieht man an den Rüstungen die Schatten, die Schlagschatten, die Reflexe und die Rauchigkeit der Hitze der Lichter, die mit derart blendenden Schattierungen dargestellt sind, daß man wahrhaft sagen kann: Er war der Lehrmeister der anderen. Wegen der Art, in der er die Nacht darstellte, die ähnlicher ist als alles, was die Malerei jemals zustande brachte, ist dieses Werk das göttlichste und wird von allen für das erlesenste gehalten.' Vasari, *Raffael* 50–51.

⁶² Castiglione B., *Il libro del Cortegiano*, hg. von W. Barberis (Turin: 1998) 108 (I.51).

⁶³ Zum Borgobrand siehe etwa Badt, "Raphael's Incendio del Borgo"; Mancinelli F. – Nesselrath A., "La Stanza dell'incendio", in *Raffaello nell'appartamento di Giulio II e Leone X* (Mailand: 1993) 292–337; Oberhuber, K., *Raffael. Das malerische Werk* (München – London – New York: 1999) 145–153; Oberhuber K. – Gnann A. (Hg.), *Roma e lo stile classico di Raffaello 1515–1527*, Ausst.-Kat. Palazzo Te, Mantua (Mailand: 1999) 64; De Vecchi P., *Raffael* (München: 2002) 189–190.

Feuers eingeht, wird dem Rezipienten durch den insistenten Verweis auf die 'Flammen', die 'Gefahr des lodernden Feuers', die 'Trümmer', die 'Feuersbrunst' und das 'Brennen' bewusst gemacht, was für gefährvolle, bei den bildinternen Akteuren Todesfurcht auslösende Momente dargestellt sind.⁶⁴ Diese mit dem Fresko nicht gänzlich übereinstimmende Betonung des Brandgeschehens ist zum Beispiel in seiner Beschreibung der Mutter zu erkennen, 'die, barfuß, mit losem, ungegürtetem Gewand, zerzaustem Haar und einem Teil ihrer Kleidung auf dem Arm, ihre Kinder vor sich genommen hat und sie schlägt, auf daß sie vor den Trümmern und der Feuersbrunst flüchten mögen'.⁶⁵ Während sich das Feuer auf der rechten Seite von Raffaels Komposition sozusagen "außerhalb" des Bildrandes befindet und für den Betrachter somit unsichtbar ist, beschreibt der Aretiner die Szene dem Leser so, als wäre das Brandgeschehen tatsächlich dargestellt.

Vasari ist sich bewusst, dass Raffael im *Borgobrand* eine außergewöhnliche malereitheoretische und wirkungsästhetische Herausforderung angenommen hat, da er so etwas schwer Darstellbares wie Feuer und dessen verheerende Wirkungen malt. Im Kontext der gesamten *Vite* und der Raffael darin zukommenden Rolle, kann Vasari so gedeutet werden, dass sich der Maler auf der Ebene der größten antiken Maler bewegt, die Undarstellbares darzustellen vermochten, ja diese gar überbietet.⁶⁶ Vasari scheint aber auch einen Wettstreit mit einem Zeitgenossen Raffaels anzudeuten, der in den *Vite* und insbesondere in der Lebensbeschreibung des Urbinate eine wichtige Rolle spielt: Albrecht Dürer, der 'Apelles Germaniae.' Dieser wurde von Erasmus von Rotterdam, der das Feuer ebenso wie Castiglione in den Katalog undarstellbarer Phänomene aufnahm, in seiner berühmten *laudatio* als der wahre Meister in diesem Bereich charakterisiert.⁶⁷ Erasmus' Lobpreisung Albrecht Dürers, die das erste Mal in seinem *Dialogus de recta latini graecique sermonis pronuntiatione* von 1528 gedruckt wurde, war ab 1532 auch in künstlerischen Kontexten wohlbekannt, hat sie doch Camerarius in seiner lateinischen Übersetzung

⁶⁴ Vasari, *Raffael* 65–66.

⁶⁵ Vasari, *Raffael* 66.

⁶⁶ Zur Überbietung der antiken Maler, wie zum Beispiel Apelles und Zeuxis, vgl. Vasaris Vorrede des dritten Teils der *Vite* (wie in Anm. 60).

⁶⁷ Zu Dürer und Erasmus vgl. Panofsky E., "Nebulae in pariete. Notes on Erasmus' Eulogy on Dürer", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 14 (1951) 34–41. Vgl. auch Stoi-chita V., "Lochi di foco: La città ardente nella pittura del Cinquecento", in Pfisterer U. – Seidel M. (Hgg.), *Visuelle Topoi. Erfindung und tradiertes Wissen in den Künsten der italienischen Renaissance* (München: 2003) 439–451.

von Dürers *Unterweisung der Messung*, also den *Institutiones geometricae*, direkt neben dem Frontispiz abdrucken lassen, was in allen folgenden lateinischen Ausgaben bis 1601 beibehalten werden sollte. Wie Giovanni Maria Fara nachweisen konnte, fertigte Cosimo Bartoli, der enge Vertraute Vasaris, schon 1537 eine italienische Übersetzung von Dürers *Institutiones* an, die er in seinem Florentiner Freundeskreis zirkulieren ließ.⁶⁸ Es ist somit nicht erstaunlich, wenn Vasari in der Vita Marcantonio Raimondis Dürers theoretische Schriften ebenso erwähnt wie Dürers Kupferstich-Porträt des Erasmus, das den Gelehrten dazu veranlasst hatte, seine Lob-schrift zu verfassen.⁶⁹ Dass ein Triumph des nordalpinen Meisters über Raffael – also über einen der drei großen Vertreter der *Maniera moderna*, der selbst Apelles übertroffen hatte – wohl kaum in Vasaris Modell der Entwicklung der Künste gepasst hätte, braucht nicht betont zu werden.

Der *paragone* zwischen Raffael und Vergil wird von Vasari hingegen direkt angesprochen: 'Auf der anderen Seite ist in der gleichen Weise, in der Vergil beschreibt, wie Anchises von Aeneas getragen wurde, ein alter, kranker Mann dargestellt, der aufgrund von Feuer und Krankheit bewußtlos ist' [Abb. 6, Detail].⁷⁰ Vergils berühmte, im zweiten Buch der *Aeneis* beschriebene Szene des brennenden Troia gehörte zu den beeindruckendsten sprachlichen Schilderungen einer *urbs incensa*, an der sich im Cinquecento sowohl Dichter als auch Maler maßen. In der Mitte seiner Beschreibung stellt sich Vergil die rhetorische Frage: 'Wer vermöchte das Leiden jener Nacht, wer das Morden mit Worten zu schildern [...]?'⁷¹ Unmissverständlich wird die Schwierigkeit problematisiert, im Medium der Sprache etwas so Schreckliches wie Troia in Flammen zu beschreiben, ein Ereignis, das sich eigentlich dem Sagbaren entzieht.

Vor diesem Hintergrund erscheint es nur logisch, wenn Vasari in seiner Beschreibung des *Borgobrands* auf die *Ut-pictura-poesis*-Debatte und die Frage der Darstellbarkeit eingeht. Raffael, der schon von Pietro Bembo als 'poeta mutolo' (stummer Dichter) gelobt wurde, gelingt es bravourös, im Medium der Malerei ein entsetzliches Schauspiel wie einen Stadtbrand

⁶⁸ Ich bedanke mich bei Giovanni Maria Fara, der mir wertvolle Hinweise gegeben hat. Vgl. Fara G.M., "La Geometria di Albrecht Dürer in Italia tra Rinascimento e Barocco", in *Albrecht Dürer, Institutiones geometricae, Cosimo Bartoli, I geometrici elementi di Alberto Durer*, hg. und komm. von G.M. Fara (Florenz: 2008) 3–142, hier 15.

⁶⁹ Vgl. Vasari G., "La Vita di Marcantonio Bolognese", in Bettarini R. – Barocchi P. (Hgg.), *Giorgio Vasari. Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori et architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568* (Florenz: 1966–1987) Bd. 5, 8.

⁷⁰ Vasari, *Raffael* 65.

⁷¹ Vergilius, *Aeneis*, hg. von G. Fink (Düsseldorf: 2005) 77 (II.362).

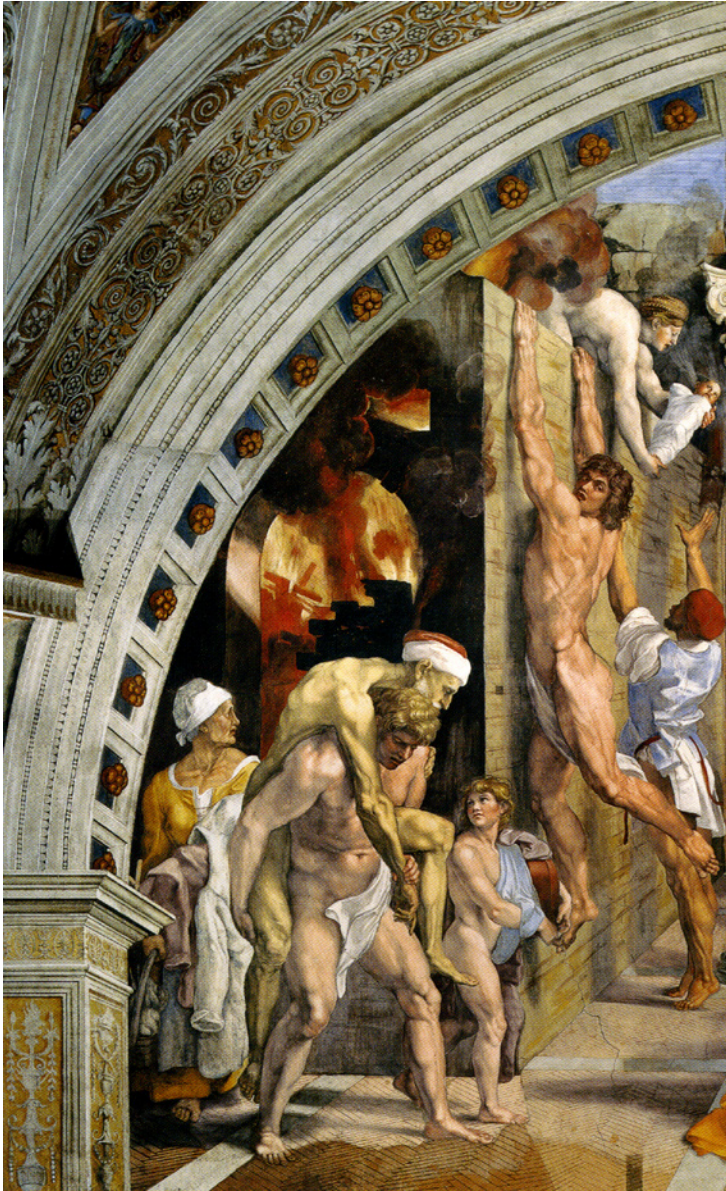


Abb. 6. Raffael, *Der Borgobrand* (1515), Fresko, Basislänge ca. 770 cm, Rom, Vatikan, Stanza dell'Incendio, Detail.

zu visualisieren und die Betrachter durch die Darstellung mannigfaltiger Affekte emotional zu involvieren. Wie Patricia Rubin gezeigt hat, sucht Vasari in seinen evokativen Nacherzählungen von Raffaels *istorie* stets, diese affektive Wirkung nachzuahmen, indem er wiederholt auf die emotionalen Zustände der dargestellten Figuren eingeht.⁷² Die unmittelbare Ausdruckskraft der Bilder, die den Betrachter allein über das Auge stark zu affizieren vermögen, wird im Verlauf der Ekphrasis, in der dem rhetorischen Paradigma des Sehens eine wichtige Rolle zukommt, besonders betont. Wenige Zeilen nach dem Verweis auf Vergil bedient sich Vasari folgender Wendung:

Und man kann nicht zum Ausdruck bringen, was sich dieser unendlich einfallreiche und bewundernswerte Künstler für die Figur einer Mutter ausdachte, die [...] ihre Kinder vor sich genommen hat, und sie schlägt, auf daß sie vor den Trümmern und der schrecklichen Feuersbrunst flüchten mögen.⁷³

Der *paragone* zwischen Malerei und Dichtung, in dessen Zentrum die Frage stand, welches Medium besser dafür geeignet sei, den Rezipienten zu emotionalisieren, wird auch an einer anderen Stelle der Beschreibung der Stanza dell'Incendio erörtert, in der *Schlacht von Ostia*. Immer wieder insistiert Vasari hierbei auf Raffaels besondere Fähigkeit, extreme emotionale Zustände, wie 'Angst', 'Schrecken' und 'Todesfurcht' nicht mittels Worten, sondern mittels Bildern auszudrücken und Schmerz sichtbar, somit wahrnehmbar, ja gar erkennbar werden zu lassen: 'so daß man den Schmerz, die Angst und den Tod auch ohne Sprache erkennt.'⁷⁴ Bezeichnenderweise verwendet Vasari im Italienischen die Formulierung des 'Erkennens ohne Worte.' Diese epistemische Dimension des Bildes ist von besonderem Interesse, da Vasari zufolge ein Bild somit nicht nur Emotionen erwecken kann, sondern das Potential besitzt, zur Erkenntnis der Dinge anzuregen. Am Ende kommt er dann zu dem Schluss, man könne 'von den Feinheiten der Werke dieses Künstlers nicht schreiben, und in Wahrheit ist es so, daß trotz ihres Schweigens jedes Ding zu sprechen scheint.'⁷⁵

Es ist kein Zufall, wenn Vasari Raffaels Meisterschaft in der Darstellung erschütternder Affekte gerade anhand eines Stadtbrandes oder eines

⁷² Vgl. Rubin P., *Giorgio Vasari. Art and History* (New Haven – London: 1994) 387.

⁷³ Vasari, *Raffael* 65.

⁷⁴ Vasari, *Raffael* 66.

⁷⁵ Vasari, *Raffael* 68. Zu diesem Themenkomplex siehe Perpeet W., *Das Kunstschöne. Sein Ursprung in der italienischen Renaissance* (München: 1987) 248–336.

Kriegsgeschehens zur Sprache bringt, handelt es sich doch um Themen, die "pathetisches" Potential bergen und den Rezipienten – wie etwa von Longin hervorgehoben – ganz anders affizieren als anmutige Szenen. Indem der Aretiner jedoch wiederholt auf die Unmöglichkeit verweist, Raffaels Kunstwerke begrifflich zu fassen, akzentuiert er *ex negativo* ihre visuelle Kraft. Dadurch wird auch die Antithetik zwischen dem Logisch-Diskursiven und dem Bildhaften thematisiert, das eine unmittelbare Affektwirkung besitzt und zugleich auch dasjenige ausdrücken kann, was sich dem Logos entzieht. Bereits bei Platon findet sich die Annahme, dass mit Hilfe von Bildern gedacht werden und sich eine bildhaft-poetische Sprache Wahrheiten annähern kann, die rein diskursiv nicht faßbar sind.⁷⁶ Longin betont die Bedeutung von Bildern und Metaphern in der Sprache ebenfalls. Gerade die erhabene Rede, die den Zuhörer zur Ekstase führt und ihn somit die Grenzen seines eigenen Verstandes überschreiten lässt, operiert häufig mit Bildern, die man 'den Hörern vor Augen stellt', so dass man meint das 'Gesagte in Begeisterung und leidenschaftlich erregt zu schauen.'⁷⁷ Das rhetorische Paradigma des "Sehens" findet sich auch bei Quintilian, der in seiner *Institutio oratoria* zudem wiederholt auf die bewegende Macht der Bilder eingeht: 'Da ja ein Gemälde, ein Werk, das schweigt [...], so tief in unsere innersten Gefühle eindringen kann, daß es ist, als überträte es selbst die Macht des gesprochenen Wortes.'⁷⁸ Das Bild – vor allem das stark pathosgeladene – wirkt unmittelbar und reißt den Zuhörer beziehungsweise Betrachter mit, der sich dieser Macht zumindest in einem ersten Moment nicht mehr entziehen kann.

Wichtig ist in diesem Zusammenhang, dass nicht nur die Ähnlichkeit mit dem Naturvorbild als Bewertungskriterium für das Kunstwerk fungiert, sondern vor allem die emotionale Reaktion des Rezipienten auf das Werk. Genau diesen Aspekt macht Vasari in der *Sala dei Giganti* und in *Palma il Vecchios Sturm* stark, wenn er schreibt, der Betrachter könne 'nichts anderes, als zu befürchten, daß alles über ihn hereinbrechen wird' oder er selbst habe noch nie ein 'ähnlich schreckenerregendes Gemälde gesehen.'⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Zu Platon und dem Verhältnis von Mythos und Logos in seinen Dialogen siehe insbesondere die Studien von Krüger G., *Eros und Mythos bei Plato* (Frankfurt am Main: 1978); Szlezak Th.A., "Die Kritik der Schriftlichkeit im Phaidros", in Id., *Platon lesen* (Stuttgart: 1993); Brisson L., "Platons Einstellung zum Mythos", in Id., *Einführung in die Philosophie des Mythos*. Bd.1. Antike, Mittelalter und Renaissance (Darmstadt: 1996) 20–38.

⁷⁷ Longinus, *Vom Erhabenen* 43 (15.1).

⁷⁸ Quintilian, *Institutionis oratoriae* 635 (XI.3.67).

⁷⁹ Vasari, *Giulio Romano* 37 und Vasari, *Palma il Vecchio* 60.

Die Darstellung intensiver Affektstrukturen wird von Vasari im Gegensatz zu Alberti durchaus positiv eingeschätzt. Wie Frank Fehrenbach dargelegt hat, wird Albertis Forderung an die Kunst, sich möglichst auf die Repräsentation von 'entzückenden und anmutigen Bewegungen' zu konzentrieren, das bedeutet "ethische" Affekte wie Ruhe, Sanftmut und Frieden darzustellen, bereits von Leonardo kritisiert.⁸⁰ Dieser versuchte anhand von Katastrophendarstellungen neben einer Ästhetik des Gefälligen auch eine des Schreckens zu visualisieren und sprachlich einzufangen. Wie sehr Vasari gerade in der 1568er-Ausgabe der *Vite* an diesem "anderen" der Ästhetik interessiert war, zeigt sich an der berühmten, in der ersten Ausgabe noch nicht vorhandenen Beschreibung von Leonardos Schild, an dem die horrifizierende Wirkung von Kunst abgehandelt wird. Vasari legt Leonardo die Worte in den Mund, dass dieses Schild, 'das Ziel erreicht, das man von allen Kunstwerken erwartet', nämlich eine heftige affektive Erschütterung, die aber zugleich ästhetischen Genuss ermöglicht.⁸¹ Die Annahme, Vasari habe dem Erhabenen in den *Vite* durchaus Bedeutung zugestanden, wird von folgendem Punkt ebenfalls gestützt: In seiner Ekphrasis von Palma il Vecchios *Sturm* richtet Vasari sein Augenmerk hauptsächlich auf die Schilderung des schrecklichen Unwetters – also eines nach Longin imponierenden Naturphänomens, das beim Menschen ebenso wie der tiefe Ozean oder der lavaspeiende Ätna Bewunderung und ein Gefühl des Erhabenen hervorruft –, während ihn die menschlichen Emotionen kaum interessieren.

Dass ein schreckliches Gemälde durchaus ästhetischen Genuss hervorrufen kann, wird – wie in der Anekdote von Leonardos Schild – auch in der Beschreibung von Palma il Vecchios *Sturm* betont [Abb. 2]. Das Werk wird unmissverständlich zum Bravourstück des Künstlers auserkoren, in dem dieser die mimetischen Qualitäten bis an ihre Grenzen getrieben hat.

Kurz, dieses Werk ist tatsächlich so schön in der Bildfindung und in allem anderen, daß es fast unmöglich scheint, als könnten Farbe und Pinsel – seien sie auch von noch so ausgezeichneten Händen benutzt – etwas ausdrücken,

⁸⁰ Alberti, *De pictura* 277 (II.44). Zu Leonardo und der Ästhetik des Schreckens siehe Fehrenbach, *Licht und Wasser*.

⁸¹ 'Messer Piero, der im ersten Moment nicht an die Sache dachte, schreckte sofort zurück, denn er konnte nicht glauben, daß dies bloß ein Schild und das Bild, das er sah, nur gemalt war. Als er zurückweichen wollte, hielt Leonardo ihn mit folgenden Worten auf: "Dieses Werk erfüllt seinen Zweck. Nehmt es also mit Euch, denn es hat das Ziel erreicht, das man von allen Kunstwerken erwartet."' Vasari G., *Das Leben des Leonardo*, hg., komm. und. engl. von S. Feser (Berlin: 2006) 23–24.

das wahrer oder natürlicher sei als dieses: Denn man sieht darin das Wüten der Winde, die Kraft und Geschicklichkeit der Männer, die Bewegungen der Wellen, die Blitze und das Aufleuchten des Himmels, das von den Rudern aufgepeitschte Wasser, und die von den Wellen und der Kraft der Schiffsleute gebogenen Ruder. Was mehr? Ich für meinen Teil erinnere mich nicht daran, jemals ein ähnlich schreckenerregendes Gemälde gesehen zu haben. [...] es scheint, als würde die Tafel beben, gerade so, als ob alles Gemalte wahr wäre.⁸²

Die hier angedeutete ästhetische Lebendigkeit ist in der italienischen Kunsttheorie des Cinquecento und insbesondere bei Vasari das meistverbreitete Lobkriterium.⁸³ Gerade in der *Maniera moderna*, die für Vasari den Höhepunkt der Künste darstellt, gilt sie als das wichtigste wirkungsästhetische Paradigma. In Palmas *Sturm* wird die Lebendigkeit des Werkes besonders intensiv heraufbeschworen. Das Beben der Leinwand verweist auf eine die Künstlichkeit und Grenzen des Bildes geradezu sprengende Kraft der gemalten Darstellung. Der *Sturm* erscheint nicht mehr lediglich als Nachahmung der erhabenen Naturgewalt, sondern als ein gleichfalls lebendiger Organismus. Der Betrachter wird somit in extremer Weise mitgerissen, wobei es bezeichnend ist, dass die Angst, die der Betrachter des *Sturms* spüren sollte, nicht mehr durch menschliche Affekte vermittelt wird, sondern durch die Darstellung des gewaltigen Naturereignisses selbst. Und genau dieses 'Wüten der Winde' und das 'Aufleuchten des Himmels' ist es, das Vasari den Ausruf entlockt, er habe noch nie ein 'ähnlich schreckenerregendes Gemälde gesehen.' Die Kraft, die den "toten" Körper des Gemäldes dynamisiert, scheint in einem ersten Moment die Distanz zwischen Rezipienten und Werk in Frage zu stellen, ein Punkt, der auch in der Schilderung der *Sala dei Giganti* ausführlich verhandelt wird. Zugleich offenbart Vasaris enthusiastische Schilderung des *Sturms*, dass hierbei offensichtlich ästhetischer Genuss empfunden wird, der wiederum nur durch die ästhetische Distanz möglich ist. Trotz der evokativen Beschreibung und der rhetorischen Übersteigerung bleibt für Vasari also die Dimension des Fiktiven bestehen.

Die vorausgegangenen Überlegungen haben gezeigt, dass Vasari in der Schilderung von Kunstwerken, in denen so dramatische Phänomene wie

⁸² Vasari, *Palma il Vecchio* 60.

⁸³ Zum Topos der ästhetischen Lebendigkeit siehe Fehrenbach F., "Kohäsion und Transgression. Zur Dialektik lebendiger Bilder", in Pfisterer U. – Zimmermann A., (Hgg.), *Animationen/Transgressionen. Das Kunstwerk als Lebewesen* (Berlin: 2005) 1–40.

Stadtbrände, Stürme und einstürzende Berge dargestellt sind, die erhabene Wirkung der Kunst zur Sprache bringt, die im Gegensatz zum gefälligen und harmonischen Schönen auf das Staunen und die Erschütterung abzielt und im Rezipienten heftige Affekte hervorruft. Überdies offenbart die Beschreibung von Pallas Athene und den Musen, dass Vasari den subjektiven Eindruck des Überwältigtwerdens gezielt mit der Möglichkeit der ästhetischen Distanznahme verbindet. Es lassen sich also schon lange vor Nicolas Boileau Despréaux' (1636–1711) Longin Übertragung *Traite du Sublime* (1674) Spuren einer Ästhetik des Erhabenen finden, die noch keineswegs erschöpfend untersucht worden sind.

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ELEVATED TWINS AND THE VICIOUS SUBLIME.
GIANLORENZO BERNINI AND LOUIS XIV

Maarten Delbeke

The stay of Gianlorenzo Bernini in Paris ended in failure. Work on the eastern wing of the Louvre according to his designs ceased almost immediately after he left the city in September 1665. The equestrian statue of Louis XIV, an idea first mentioned during Bernini's visit, was begun soon after Bernini's return in Rome but arrived in France only in 1685, to mixed reviews.¹ And even the most successful witness of Bernini's work for the King, the marvelous bust now in Versailles, remained incomplete. The Diary that Paul Fréart de Chantelou kept of the artist's stay mentions an elaborate design for a pedestal, never to be executed. [Figs. 1, 2]

In contrast to this poor record of artistic achievement, the early biographies of Bernini paint an intimate and warm relation between the artist and the monarch. If these texts cast the bust and the equestrian as the tangible outcome of this intimacy, they also suggest a familiarity between the two men that went far beyond the confines of the artistic endeavours that Bernini was asked to undertake. Bernini, the greatest artist of his day and age, and Louis, the greatest King on earth, are of the same mettle. Both are sublime.

This idea is most prominent in the biography that Bernini's youngest son, Domenico, published in 1713, the *Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino*. As the second Italian monographic biography of the artists, it shares much material with Filippo Baldinucci's *Vita*, published in 1682, barely two years after Bernini's death. As Tomaso Montanari has shown, both books derive from a real biographical campaign instigated by the Bernini-family in the 1670s in order to ensure Gianlorenzo's posthumous fame in the face of severe slights to his reputation, the failure of

¹ See Wittkower R., "The vicissitudes of a dynastic monument: Bernini's equestrian statue of Louis XIV", in Meiss M. (ed.), *De artibus opuscula. Essays in honor of Erwin Panofsky* (New York: 1961) 497–531. For a global interpretation of Bernini's work in France, see Lavin I., "Bernini's Image of the Sun King", in idem, *Past-Present. Essays on Historicism in Art from Donatello to Picasso* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-Oxford: 1993) 139–202.



Fig. 1. Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Bust of Louis XIV*, 1665, Versailles.

the trip to France one of them.² If Baldinucci pays much attention to the honours bestowed upon Bernini by Louis XIV and portrays the stay in Paris as a culminating point in Bernini's career, Domenico emphasizes the fundamental parentage between artist and King even more. He does so by developping and transforming the motive behind the third early biography of Bernini, the *Éloge de M. le cavalier Bernin* and *Préface pour servir à l'histoire de la vie et des ouvrages du Cavalier Bernin* by Bernini's friend Pierre Cureau de la Chambre. The *Éloge* is a biographical sketch published in the *Journal des sçavans* in 1681 shortly after Bernini's death, which was later extended and paired to the *Préface*, an outline for a more elaborate biography originally read in the Académie française in Paris on 2 January 1685.³ La Chambre motivates his biography by stating that

² Montanari T., "Bernini e Cristina di Svezia. Alle origini della storiografia Berniniana", in Angelini A. (ed.), *Gianlorenzo Bernini e i Chigi tra Roma e Siena* (Siena: 1998) 328–477; idem, "At the margins of the historiography of art. The *Vite* of Bernini between Autobiography and Apologia", in Delbeke M. – Levy E. – Ostrow S.F. (eds.), *Bernini's Biographies. Critical Essays* (University Park: 2006) 73–109.

³ Montanari T., "Pierre Cureau de la Chambre e la prima biografia di Gian Lorenzo Bernini", *Paragone* 24–25, 3rd series (1999) 103–132.



Fig. 2. Reconstruction of the pedestal of the bust of Louis XIV by Gianlorenzo Bernini, taken from: Wittkower R., *Bernini lo scultore del barocco romano* (Milan: 1990) cat. no. 70.

Bernini was one of the few able to penetrate the sublimeness of the King. Domenico picks up and enhances this point as proof of the artist's own all-encompassing virtue, a notion central to Domenico's very conception of Bernini's art. In so doing, Domenico pushes La Chambre's suggestions far beyond what the French author himself would have allowed, opening a chasm between the sublime as a function of artistic genius and as the attribute of an increasingly absolutist monarch dear to the French. This divergence becomes visible when an important text on the sublime style, the *Manière de bien penser dans les ouvrages de l'esprit* (1687) by the French Jesuit Dominique Bouhours seizes upon Bernini's bust and the design for its pedestal (among many other examples) to decry the Italian use of hyperbole. Thus, Bernini's work for Louis XIV and by implication his personal relation with the King, become subject of competing visions on the sublime.

Bernini and the Sublime Monarch in Pierre Cureau de la Chambre

Pierre Cureau de la Chambre's *Préface pour servir à l'histoire de la vie et des ouvrages du Cavalier Bernin* aims to frame Bernini within a history of sculpture culminating in the representation of Louis XIV. Indeed, the main reason for undertaking the biography is found in Bernini's familiarity with the King:

I feel in a certain sense animated by the passion that each subject should have for his prince, and for a prince so admirable as ours, to draw from silence and oblivion what I learned from the own mouth of the Cavalier Bernini concerning Louis the Great. Since he [Bernini] had a particular talent to judge the depth and merit of persons – thanks to his singular ability to insinuate himself in their spirits and so discover all its power and size – he often admitted to me . . . that he had carefully examined His Majesty while working on his bust, but that he had never known a genius so vast and sublime, a spirit of such good mettle, or, to use his own words, . . . “di così buon metallo”, and that all others that he had seen only served for him to better understand his greatness and beauty. A testimony so authentic and coming from the mouth of such an illustrious stranger will contribute, perhaps, no less to consecrating the glory of our august prince to immortality than the equestrian statue that this new Praxiteles has elevated in honour of his Alexander. His victories, his triumphs, the peaceful reign to which he has submitted his great courage are known by all. But how few people have gone back to the source of so many great things? How few have penetrated to these huge insides, of which the outside is so pompous and brilliant?

Only geniusses of the first order can see it all in its entirety. Such was the cavalier Bernini.⁴

This passage connects the greatness of the King with Bernini's *persona*, both as a man of exceptional insight and an artist of unsurpassed skill. It abounds in quantitative evocations of Louis' magnitude, of 'un genie vaste et sublime,' of 'étendu,' 'grandeur,' 'dedans immenses,' 'grandes choses.' Since Louis' greatness is too vast to encompass, the testimony of one of those rare people who penetrated into the King's soul and seized his true being is invaluable. La Chambre explains Bernini's profound understanding of Louis by the artist's 'adresse singuliere avec laquelle il sçavoit s'insinuer dans leur esprit et en découvrir par ce moyen toute la force et l'étendue,' an ability that extends into his portraiture. Bernini's ability to grasp the true essence of people, La Chambre suggests, transforms his life and work into a testimony of Louis le Grand.

By setting up his intended biography as the history of an artist's confrontation with superhuman greatness, La Chambre follows closely in the footsteps of André Félibien's *Portrait du Roy* of 1663.⁵ This description of

⁴ I have used Cureau de la Chambre P., "Préface pour servir à l'histoire de la vie et des oeuvres du Cavalier Bernin", ed. Montanari T., in idem, "Pierre Cureau de la Chambre" 115–126, here 115–116: 'Je me sens d'ailleurs animé par la passion que tout sujet doit avoir pour son prince, et pour un prince aussi admirable que le nostre, à tirer du silence et le l'oubly ce que j'ay appris de la propre bouche du cavalier Bernin touchant Louis le Grand. Comme il avoit un talent tout particulier pour juger du fond et du merite des personnes – par l'adresse singuliere avec laquelle il sçavoit s'insinuer dans leur esprit et en découvrir par ce moyen toute la force et l'étendue –, il m'a souvent avoué, . . . , qu'il avoit examiné soigneusement Sa Majesté dans le temps qu'il travailloit à son buste, mais qu'il n'avoit jamais connu un genie si vaste et si sublime, un esprit de si bonne trempe, ou, pour me servir de ses propres termes . . . "di così buon metallo", et que tous les autres qu'il avoit veus jusqu'alors ne servoient qu'à luy en faire mieux comprendre la grandeur et la beauté. Un témoignage si authentique et de la bouche d'un si illustre étranger ne contribuëra, peut estre, pas moins à consacrer la gloire de nostre auguste prince à l'immortalité que la statuë equestre que ce nouveau Praxitele vient d'élever à l'honneur de son Alexandre. Ses victoires, ses triomphes, le regne pacifique où il a reduit son grand courage sont connus de tout le monde. Mais combien peu de personnes ont remonté jusqu'à la source de tant de grandes choses? Combien peu ont penetré jusqu'à ces dedans immenses, dont les dehors sont si pompeux et si éclatants? Il n'y a que les genies de premier ordre qui le puissent voir tout entier. Tel a esté le cavalier Bernin.'

⁵ I have used the edition in Félibien A., *Recueil de descriptions de peintures et d'autres ouvrages faits pour le Roy* (Paris: 1689) 69–94. See Pagliano É., "Le discours sur l'art par prétérition. Décrire les représentations du roi. La galerie de Versailles et *Le Portrait du roi* par Félibien", in Michel C. – Saison M. (eds.), *La naissance de la théorie de l'art en France, Revue d'esthétique* 31–32 (Paris: 1997) 161–172, esp. 170–172. Montanari, "Pierre Cureau de la Chambre" 112 points out some parallels between La Chambre's and Félibien's critical vocabulary.

an otherwise unknown equestrian portrait by Charles le Brun points out that the painter 'has enclosed in a quite mediocre space the Portrait of a King whose name fills the entire earth,' suggesting the same tension between the King's 'étendu' and the limits of both mortal men and art in seizing that greatness that is central to the *Préface*.⁶ La Chambre, in celebrating Bernini's ability to portray the King, also echoes Félibien's notion that 'Heaven . . . which renders visible in your person an accomplished Monarch, has wanted to produce at the same time Workers capable of representing it in a dignified manner; and it has spread in the spirit of these knowing men lights so penetrating, that one sees expressed in their Works the beauty of their conceptions . . .'⁷ Finally, Félibien constructs a similar parallel between the greatness of art – here painting – and the nobility of the King as visible in his body, a parallel that recalls the accomplishments of antiquity and especially the portraits of Alexander:

But I admit that, always training my eyes on this image, I have trouble removing them from it, to examine with more care all these other parts of the Painting; and I find so much resemblance in this Portrait, that if the works of Apelles have given occasion to say that there were two Alexanders, that the son of Philip was the Invincible, and the one of Apelles the Inimitable; then it is possible to say today with more truth that in your Person, and your Portrait, we have two Kings, who both will never have anything comparable.

It was no small advantage for the painter Zeuxis to meet in Greece so many beautiful girls so that he could form with all their different beauties this Figure so famous, which he made into the perfect model of Beauty. But how much is it a greater joy for this excellent Painter of today, to find in the single person of Your Majesty all that is required to make the Painting of a King, who in the future will be the model of all other Kings?⁸

⁶ Félibien, *Receuil* 75: 'Il a peint sur une toile d'une moyenne grandeur l'Image de V.M. & a renfermé dans un espace fort mediocre le Portrait d'un Roy, dont le nom remplit toute la terre.'

⁷ Félibien, *Receuil* 73: 'le Ciel . . . qui rend visible en vostre personne un Monarque accompli, a voulu produire en mesme temps des Ouvriers capables de le dignement représenter; et il a répandu dans l'esprit de ces savans hommes des lumières si penetrantes, que l'on voit dans leurs Ouvrages la beauté de leurs conceptions exprimée. . . .'

⁸ Félibien, *Receuil* 93–94: 'Mais j'avoûë qu'ayant toujours les yeux sur cette Image, j'ay peine à les en oster, pour examiner avec plus de soin toutes ces autres parties du Tableau; & je trouve tant de ressemblance dans ce Portrait, que si les ouvrages d'Appelés ont donné occasion de dire autrefois qu'il y avoit deux Aléxandres; que le fils de Philippes estoit l'Invincible, & celuy d'Appelés l'Inimitable; il y a lieu de dire aujourd'huy avec plus de vérité, qu'en vostre Personne, & en vostre Portrait, nous avons deux Rois, qui tous deux n'auront jamais rien de comparable. Ce ne fut pas un petit avantage au Peintre Zeuxis, de rencontrer dans la Grece tant de belles filles, pour former sur toutes leurs différentes

By the time that La Chambre measured Bernini's value by his ability to tackle the representation of royal greatness, it had become commonplace to describe Louis XIV in the terms already employed by Félibien. In fact, Chantal Grell has shown that from the 1670s onwards especially the 'modernes' substituted the conventional comparison of the King with Alexander the Great, the primary *exemplum* of the great monarch, by the idea that Louis XIV alone embodied a greatness encompassing the virtues dispersed amongst other 'great' heroes and rulers of old. He therefore became the 'original' King.⁹ This idea is already implicit in the device *Nec pluribus impar* adopted by the King in 1662. Translated as 'il peut suffire à plus d'un monde' in the *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* (1671) written by the French Jesuit Dominique Bouhours, it echoes earlier royal devices like *Unus non sufficit orbis* ('One world does not suffice me') and recalls Juvenal's remark that Alexander the Great required more than one world.¹⁰ But interpreted as 'inferior to none' it lifts Louis well above the fray of his illustrious predecessors. The idea of Louis as an *über*-King is developed at length by Claude Charles Guyonnet de Vertron, a royal historian, in his *Parallèle de Louis le Grand avec tous les Princes qui ont été surnommez Grands* of 1685, and again in his *Nouveau Pantheon* (1686).¹¹ The true 'new Pantheon' is Louis himself:

beautez cette Figure si célèbre, dont il fit le parfait modele de la Beauté. Mais combien est-ce un plus grand bonheur à cet excellent Peintre d'aujourd'huy, de trouver dans la seule personne de V.M. de-quoy faire la Peinture d'un Roy, qui sera à l'avenir le modele de tous les autres Rois?' The same idea occurs in the *Plainte des statues du palais Mazarin au Roy* of circa 1670, see Michel P., *Mazarin, prince des collectionneurs. Les collections et l'ameublement du Cardinal Mazarin (1602-1661), histoire et analyse* (Paris: 1999) Appendix B, 572: 'Tous les portraits un iour soient des originaux / que tes bustes portes sur la terre et sur l'onde / montrent l'art Reignier a tous les Roys du monde / et que leurs traicts mesles de grace et de fierté / Inspirent tes vertus à la posterité.'

⁹ Grell C. – Michel C., *L'école des princes, ou, Alexandre disgracié: essai sur la mythologie monarchique de la France absolutiste* (Paris: 1988) 71–73. See also Marin L., *Le portrait du roi* (Paris: 1981) 251–260, which discusses Félibien's *Portrait du roi*.

¹⁰ Bouhours D., *Les entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène*, ed. B. Beugnot – G. Declercq (Paris: 2003) 313–316, with the reference to Juvenal, *Satire X*, 168.

¹¹ Vertron C. – Guyonnet de G., *Parallèle de Louis le Grand avec les princes qui ont esté surnommez Grands* (Paris, J. Le Febvre: 1685); idem, *Le nouveau Pantheon ou le rapport des divinitez du paganisme, des heros de l'antiquité, et des princes surnommez grands, aux vertus et aux actions de Louis le Grand avec des inscription Latines & Françaises en Vers & en Prose, pour l'Histoire du Roy, pour le revers de ces Médailles, pour le Monuments publics érigés à sa gloire, & pour les principales Statués du Palais de Versailles* (Paris, J. Morel: 1686). This book consists of two separately numbered volumes. The *Parallèle*, an oration, is the basis for Guyonnet de Vertron's *Louis le Grand Poeme heroique dédié à Monsieur Le Dauphin* (Bibliothèque Nationale de France YE-4784). All these publications follow the same logic,

By his rare virtues and thousand works
 LOUIS fills the luster of the beautiful name he is given
 The whole Universe admires in his single person
 All the qualities of the GODS and HEROES¹²

Louis is at once 'penetrating, prudent, prompt, happy, nice, affable, equitable, glorious, splendid, acts without error,' he foresees the future, and 'through the lights of his spirit / is dedicated to all things.'¹³ Guyonnet stresses that 'in order to represent naturally this Conqueror of Princes, the Great of the Greats, and the masterpiece of the Heavens, one should have perfect knowledge of the divine language,' signalling the emergence of the sublime as the category that collapses the ethical and aesthetic aspects of the exceedingly grand royal *persona*.¹⁴ René Rapin, too, following Nicolas Boileau's translation of Longinus' *Peri Houpsos* of 1674, had treated the sublime as an ethical category in his *Du grand et du sublime dans les mœurs et les différentes conditions des hommes* (1686), to posit Louis XIV as the ultimate compendium of moral greatness. As the exemplum of moral perfection, in turn, the King also embodies perfect beauty.¹⁵

As we have seen, La Chambre's *Préface* is imbued with this notion of a sublime Louis. His contemporaries' endless rapsodies on the truly exceptional nature of his King probably also induced him to make a very clear distinction between the greatness of Louis XIV and the all too human nature of Bernini. The truthful portrait of the great artist that he intends to write will hide nothing of his weaknesses and misadventures, the *Préface* states. If Bernini saw and seized the sublime monarch, he still remains a mortal man, a 'strange composite of good and evil.' Those writers who embellish the lives of men, La Chambre argues, produce 'disguised portraits made for pleasure: nothing natural or resembling,' only fit for the

casting Louis as the compendium of all royal virtues by means of comparisons with gods, heroes and kings.

¹² Guyonnet de Vertron, *Le nouveau Pantheon* 66: 'Par ses rares vertus, & par milles travaux / LOUIS remplit l'éclat du beau nom qu'on luy donne, / Tout l'Univers admire en sa seule personne / Toutes les qualitez des DIEUZ & des HEROS.'

¹³ Guyonnet de Vertron, *Le nouveau Pantheon* 68: 'penetrant, prudent, prompt, heureux, agreable, affable, equitable, glorieux, magnifique, agit sans erreur, . . . par les lumieres de son esprit / est appliqué à toutes choses.'

¹⁴ Guyonnet de Vertron, *Le nouveau Pantheon* Lettre 9–10: 'pour représenter au naturel le Conquerant des Princes, le Grand des Grands, & le chef-d'oeuvre des Cieux, il faudroit sçavoir parfaitement le langage divin.'

¹⁵ See Dubois E., *René Rapin. L'homme et l'oeuvre* (Lille: 1972) 567–581; Viola C., *Tradizioni letterarie a confronto. Italia e Francia nella polemica Orsi-Bouhours* (Verona: 2001) 14–33; Delahanty A., "From Judgment to Sentiment: Changing Theories of the Sublime, 1674–1710", *Modern Language Quarterly* 66, 2 (2005) 151–172, here 152.

theatre, the spectacle and the festival.¹⁶ The life and deeds of real men are variegated and subject to vicissitudes, not uniformly good.

Bernini and Louis XIV in Domenico Bernini

This distinction differentiates La Chambre's texts to the Italian *Vite*, much more inclined to present an idealized picture of Bernini, as Baldinucci himself would stress in the Preface to his own biography.¹⁷ Domenico, on the other hand, does not criticize La Chambre's method, but accords a central role to the *composé* that characterized the latter's Bernini. The notion is expanded to the point that it signals the fundamental parentage between the artist and the King, rather than the difference. In fact, the very first paragraph of the *Vita* states that 'since [Bernini] with a *maraviglioso composto* of highly praised gifts, each of which could have rendered any man admirable and great, was so well able to furnish his soul with all, that his greatest achievement was not to be praised as excellent in the profession he exercised; so much he had in himself with eminence all the parts, that shape a man of great and virtuous idea.'¹⁸ Domenico's chronological story of his father's life concludes with a final restatement of the same idea: Bernini led his life 'with such a *composto* of Body, Habits, Complexion, and Naturalness, that would become to form a Man of Great Ideas, and Actions'.¹⁹

This notion of *composto* or *composé* as a *compendium virtutis* had an important precedent in artistic discourse, especially in characterizations

¹⁶ Cureau de la Chambre, "Préface" 116–117: 'Ce sont des portraits extremement finis, mais de pur caprice et de fantaisie, des portraits fardez et faits à plaisir: rien de naturel et de ressemblant, . . . Ce n'est assurément point là cet étrange composé de bien et de mal que l'on appelle l'homme, . . .'

¹⁷ Montanari, "Pierre Cureau de la Chambre" 108–109.

¹⁸ Bernini D., *Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino, descritta da Domenico Bernino suo figlio* (Perugia: 1999) 2: 'Poiche egli con di pregiatissime doti, ciascuna delle quali in se stessa poteva rendere ammirabile e grande ogni huomo, seppe cosi ben di tutte fornire il suo animo, che non fu il maggior pregio in lui l'essere acclamato per eccellente nella professione che fece: Tanto in se hebbe con eccellenza ancora tutte quelle parti, che posson formare un'huomo d'idea grande, e virtuoso.'

¹⁹ Bernini, *Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino* 177: 'Con un composto tale di Corpo, Costumi, Complessione, e Naturalzza, quale si conveniva per formare un'Huomo d'Idee grandi, e di Operazioni.' See also Williams R., "'Always like himself.' Character and Genius in Bernini's Biographies", in Delbeke – Levy – Ostrow, *Bernini's Biographies* 181–199.

of Michelangelo.²⁰ If, according to Domenico, like Michelangelo Gianlorenzo 'formed within himself a marvelous *composto* of all [three arts] in himself,'²¹ allowing him to break free from the rules of art and follow his innate judgment, his artistic qualities are only one, albeit essential, part of his accumulation of virtues. It is a universal principle manifest in any endeavor Bernini undertakes or could want to undertake.²² Precisely this capacity elevates the artist into the realm of popes, kings and queens, Domenico's *Vita* suggests, who recognized him as almost one of their own. In Paris, the Queen, the King and all the 'greats' received Bernini with extraordinary applause, and ever increasing admiration for his *ingegno*, 'which on each and every occasion proved itself so fertile with *concetti*.'²³ Christina of Sweden discovered in Bernini 'such an elevated *ingegno* and such a perfect judgment, that Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, which he possessed with eminence, were only the minor parts of excellence bestowed upon this man by God.'²⁴ The esteem of Alexander VII for Bernini is cast in similar terms.²⁵

The ultimate recognition that '[Bernini] truly was a man of high ideas, and born with the ability to correspond with each most vast idea of a sublime Monarch' occurs at the court of Louis XIV.²⁶ Louis XIV himself discerned in Bernini 'the *Idea* of an elevated *ingegno*, and a *composto* of all excellent gifts.'²⁷ Domenico further approaches the young king and the

²⁰ Vasari Giorgio, *Le Vite de'piu eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori* (Florence: 1568) VI, 3–4, 110: 'Et invero Michelagnolo collocò sempre l'amor suo a persone nobili, meritevoli e degne, ché nel vero ebbe giudizio e gusto in tutte le cose.'

²¹ Bernini, *Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino* 32–33.

²² For an elaboration of this point, I permit myself to refer to Delbeke M., "Gianlorenzo Bernini's 'bel composto'. The unification of life and work in biography and historiography", in Delbeke – Levy – Ostrow, *Bernini's Biographies* 251–274.

²³ Bernini, *Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino* 136: '... essa [the Queen], il Rè, e tutti que'Grandi lo riceverono con applauso non ordinario, e con ammirazione sempre maggiore dell'ingegno del Bernino, che in tutte le occasioni si mostrava così fecondo di Concetti.'

²⁴ Bernini, *Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino* 104: '... , che nella continua pratica havuto col Bernino l'havevo scoperto di un'ingegno così elevato, e di un giudizio così perfetto, che la Pittura, Scultura, & Architettura possedute da lui in eminenza, erano le minor parti di eccellenza, di cui quel grand'Huomo era stato dotato da Dio.'

²⁵ Bernini, *Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino* 95–9.

²⁶ Bernini, *Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino* 129: 'Veramente egli era un'Huomo di alte Idee, e nato con capacita di corrispondere ad ogni più vasto pensiero di sublime Monarca.'

²⁷ Bernini, *Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino* 130: 'Mà il Rè, che in lui conosceva un'idea d'ingegno elevata, & un composto di doti tutte eccellenti, ...'

old artist, both compendia of 'unmatchable gifts',²⁸ by quoting Hugues de Lionne's description of Bernini as 'transformed in Trumpet of the Most Christian King, who from sculptor has almost rendered him stone.'²⁹ The King becomes the artist, adopting and subverting Bernini's own famed ability to turn stones into living statues.

Both La Chambre and Domenico insist that this parentage explains Bernini's ability to portray the greats of this earth. As we have seen, La Chambre states that Bernini grasped the being of Louis because of the 'singular dexterity with which he knew how to insinuate himself into their spirit and so discover all its power and extension,' an ability that extends into his portraiture.³⁰ When Louis XIII saw Bernini's bust of Richelieu, Domenico writes, 'it seemed that one also saw the virtue of the Cavaliere sculpted in it.'³¹ La Chambre's remark that Bernini 'had carefully examined his majesty when he worked on the bust' echoes the extensive descriptions of Bernini's method in making portraits in Domenico's biography, where by watching the King at work or play the sculptor succeeded at seizing 'all those qualities, that are his, and not of others, and which give likeness to the portrait.'³²

As Louis' panegyrists pointed out to us, the crucial quality that is 'his, and not of others', is that he contains all virtues, even when they are not easily reconciled. Bernini's particular capability consists of seizing and uniting this array. Chantelou's diary remarks that Bernini's bust conveys that the King is at once strict and kind, ferocious and generous.³³ Some thirty years earlier Lelio Guidiccioni had already characterized Bernini's work in similar terms, when he described the artist's portrait busts of

²⁸ Bernini, *Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino* 144: 'Intanto il Cavaliere pubblicava per Rome le doti impareggiabili di quel Monarca con un'ardore tale, che ben diceva potersi impiegare il tempo in sostenere i disagi del viaggio per solamente vederlo: Tanto ei grande appariva e nella vastità dell'Intelletto, e nella fecondità dell'Ingegno, e nella magnificenza della Corte, & in tutto ciò che può rendere riguardevole un gran Principe, che fosse simile ad esso.'

²⁹ Ibid., 'E' giunto in Roma il Cavalier Bernino trasformato in Tromba del Rè Christianissimo, chi di Scultore l'hà renduto quasi sasso....'

³⁰ See the quote above, note 4.

³¹ Bernini, *Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino* 70: '... quando veduto il Ritratto del Cardinale, parve che in esso eziandio vedesse scolpita la virtù del Cavaliere.'

³² Bernini, *Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino* 134: 'tutte quelle qualità, che sono sue, e non di altri, e che danno la somiglianza al Ritratto.' See Delbeke M., 'The Pope, the Bust, the Sculptor, and the Fly', *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome* 70 (2000) 175–223, here 216–217.

³³ Chantelou P. Fréart de, *Journal de voyage du Cavalier Bernin en France*, ed. Milovan Stanic (Paris: 2001) 205 (26 September).

Urban VIII and Scipio Borghese in a letter of 4 June 1633.³⁴ Guidiccioni casts Urban VIII as the *artefice* who has woken the artists of a new Golden Age, first among them Bernini, 'subject and creature who performs miracles in making marbles speak.'³⁵ A first testimony of Bernini's success is his bust of Urban of 1632.³⁶ Guidiccioni's description of the effigy enumerates antitheses: the work of art unites a stupefying 'variety of things' and '*affetti* that are mutually diverse'; Bernini has 'enlivened and expressed many *affetti*, and many views, that would have been mutually repulsive in the natural, if through art [Bernini] had not reconciled them with harmony together.'³⁷ Guidiccioni lists the different and contrasting emotions that are 'united' in the portrait, such as thoughtful and merry, sweet and majestic, spirited and grave, laughing and reverent.³⁸ He concludes: 'Thus are made portraits of rulers.'³⁹

The transfer of greatness from model to sculptor, exemplified in the relation of Bernini to Louis XIV, lifts the artist's *composto* empathically from the sphere of the merely artistic. King and artist meet in the realm of the sublime. In fact, Domenico uses the word exclusively to describe the minds of rulers and their recognition of Bernini's innate creativity or *ingegno*.⁴⁰ The

³⁴ Guidiccioni's letter, manuscript Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. Lat. 2958, fol. 202–7, was first published by D'Onofrio C., *Roma vista da Roma* (Rome: 1967) 381–388. I have used the new transcription in Zitzlsperger P., *Gianlorenzo Bernini: die Papst- und Herrscherporträts. Zum Verhältnis von Bildnis und Macht* (Munich: 2002) 179–183. On the letter, see also Schütze S., "Busto di Urbano VIII", in Coliva A. – Schütze S. (eds.), *Bernini scultore. La nascita del Barocco in Casa Borghese* (Rome: 1998) 248–250, cat. no. 28.

³⁵ Guidiccioni, *Letter*, f. 203v, in Zitzlsperger, *Gianlorenzo Bernini* 179, line 10–14: 'Non sò io che il gloriosissimo Papa Urbano Nostro Signore fra l'altre laudi, che può meritarsi d'essere stato artefice di nobili artefici, che svegliati dalla sua virtù fanno fiorire il suo tempo (perche l'api non si veggono dove i prati non siano fioriti) con ogni ragione può gloriarsi che Vostra Signoria è soggetto et creatura che fa miracoli facendo parlare i marmi.'

³⁶ See Schütze S., "Busto di Urbano VIII"; Zitzlsperger, *Gianlorenzo Bernini* 55–87, cat. no. 8.

³⁷ Guidiccioni, *Letter*, f. 203v, in Zitzlsperger, *Gianlorenzo Bernini* 179, line 20–23: 'Ma stupenda è la varietà delle cose, et degli affetti trà lor diversi, con dolce consonanza, in esser rappresentati. . . Hor quello che è da stupire, Vostra Signoria nella faccia di Sua Santità ha vivacizzati (?) et espressi molti affetti, et molte vedute, che sarebbero tra lor ripugnanti in via di natura, se in via d'arte ella non l'havesse con armonia conciliate insieme.'

³⁸ Ibid. 180, line 29–34: 'ma se l'investigargli fù studio d'industria, l'eliggergli virtù di giudizio et l'esprimergli sua . . . menza d'imaginazione, il convincergli et mettergli insieme fù opera di tutte queste cose, et fù disentione d'arteficio essendo chiaro che la disentione entra in ogni virtù . . . entrano tutti. Così si vede quel ritratto pensoso con allegria, dolce con maestà, spiritoso con gravità; ride et è venerando; . . .'

³⁹ Guidiccioni, *Letter*, f. 204r, in Zitzlsperger, *Gianlorenzo Bernini* 180, line 41: 'Così si fanno i ritratti de' Principi.'

⁴⁰ Bernini, *Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino* 67, the 'sublime grandezza' of Cardinal Richelieu; 104, the 'sublime ingegno' of Christina of Sweden, who goes on to recognize Bernini's *composto* of gifts, and the similar *ingegno* of Rinaldo d'Este (162); 110, the 'sublime

opening sentence of the biography empathically introduces the theme of elevation, with an uncharacteristic repetition of the word 'sublime' itself. Domenico marvels at how Providence demonstrated that she could confer such 'ultimate virtue' to one man in order to achieve 'ultimate glory', and how 'sole merit' would provide a 'stable, and sublime . . . base . . . to elevate one to the summit of the honours'.⁴¹ Virtue and merit guarantee Bernini's access to the realm of rulers.

The discussions on the pedestal: le sublime vicieux

Domenico's metaphor of the 'elevating base' echoes Bernini's intended pedestal for Louis's bust. The echo is signaled by the peculiar coupling of 'stable' and 'sublime', which recall key features of Bernini's design. If the analogy between Bernini's and Louis' 'ultimate honours' thus construed provides yet another marker of the parentage between artist and King, it also served to answer criticism leveled at the pedestal and by extension the bust itself. This criticism attacked the core of Bernini's representation of Louis as it was understood by La Chambre and Domenico, a true portrait of the sublime born from an exceptional artistic understanding of its essence.

The pedestal is described in the *Vita* by means of two poems that discuss the design and the underlying *concetto*. Domenico knew the poems through the *Éloge*, and as in La Chambre, in the *Vita* the poetic descriptions of the pedestal stand in for the bust itself; they praise 'the artist, the portrayed, and the work.' According to Domenico, from Rome came the following 'bel concetto':

Bernini entered into a profound thought
in order to make for the royal bust a beautiful support
and he said, since he found none worth of the task
A small base for such a monarch is the world

intendimento' of Alexander VII, for whom Bernini performs 'sublimi operazioni' (109); 118, the 'sublime intendimento' of Louis XIV, who presides over a 'sublime' court (141). Bernini's own *ingegno* is qualified as sublime on p. 27 by Urban VIII, and on p. 65 by Charles I.

⁴¹ Bernini, *Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino* 1–2: 'Se forse mai ne'tempi andati hà voluto a Noi dimostrare la Providenza altissima del Cielo, quanto conferir possa al conseguimento di una somma virtù, e quanto stabile, e sublime sia la base del solo merito, per sollevar tal'uno al colmo degli honori, certamente fu all'hora, quando fece comparire al Mondo Cavalier Gio:Lorenzo Bernino, di cui per avventura nessun'altro vidde pari l'età nostra nell'eccellenza de'fatti, e nella sublimità degli applausi, e che può annoverarlo la fama tra i più riguardevole ingegni de'tempi andati, con farne restar così gloriosa la memoria alli presenti, che debba essere ammirata ancora dalli futuri.'

To which Bernini 'immediately' replied:

Never such a deep thought came to my help
in order to make for a King so great a worthy support
vain would have been the thought, for support
does not need he who supports the world.⁴²

As can be gathered from these two poems, the artist intended an elaborate pedestal shaped as a globe and carrying the inscription 'picciola base'. The design is known from rather more elaborate descriptions recorded in Chantelou's *Journal*: the globe would rest on a tapestry made from the same material, and the ensemble would be decorated with trophies of war and virtues.⁴³ The Diary also shows that from the very start Bernini's invention was contested. In their first discussion of the pedestal, Chantelou is anxious to suggest 'that Bernini signed it with his name, to say that it is he who invented and made it, so that noone would think that it is the King speaking and believing that the world is too small a base for him.'⁴⁴ Three days later, on 13 September,

He [Bernini] said on this topic to the abbot Butti that the *mot* of *picciola base* seemed to him more fitting than *sed parva*, which the abbot had found, who maintained that the word *base* said too much; that a device should give food for thought. The knight [Bernini] answered that *base* for a world left enough to think about.⁴⁵

Thus, Chantelou and Butti voice similar reservations about the ensemble of bust, pedestal and inscription.⁴⁶ Chantelou reads Bernini's pedestal as

⁴² Bernini, *Vita del cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino* 136–37: 'Entrò'l Bernin' in un pensier profondo / Per far al Regio Busto un bel sostegno, / E disse, non trovandone alcun degno, / Piccola basa a tal Monarca è il Mondo, . . . Mai mi sovenne quel pensier profondo: / Per far di Rè sì grande appoggio degno: / Van'sarebbe il pensier, che di sostegno / Non hà bisogno, Chì sostiene il mondo.'

⁴³ On the history and the design of the pedestal, see Wittkower R., *Bernini lo scultore del barocco romano* (Milan: 1990) cat. no. 70.

⁴⁴ Chantelou, *Journal de voyage du Cavalier Bernin* 171–172 (10 September): 'qu'il fallait qu'il [Bernini] y mît son nom, pour dire que c'est lui qui l'a inventé et l'a fait, afin qu'on ne pense pas que ce soit le Roi qui parle et qui trouve que le monde est une trop petite base pour lui.'

⁴⁵ Chantelou, *Journal de voyage du Cavalier Bernin* 178 (13 September): 'Il a dit à ce sujet à l'abbé Butti que le mot de *picciola base* lui semblait cadrer mieux que celui de: *sed parva*, que l'abbé avait trouvé, lequel a soutenu que le mot de *base* exprimait trop; qu'aux devises il faut laisser à penser. Le cavalier a répliqué que *base* pour un monde donnait assez à penser.'

⁴⁶ Similar points are made in Zitzlsperger P., "Die globale Unendlichkeit: Berninis Sockelplanung für seine Porträtbüste Ludwigs XIV", in Bredekamp H. – Schneider P. (eds.), *Visuelle Argumentationen: die Mysieren der Repräsentation und die Berechenbarkeit der*

a *pensée* or device expressing a notion of grandeur closely akin to *Nec pluribus impar*, but urges the artist to clarify the source of the invention and distance its voice from the King.⁴⁷ Butti, a court poet, thinks that the inscription is not good enough. His own suggestion, *Sed parva* (but modest), invites completion, perhaps recalling and inverting the Horatian *Parva sed apta mihi* (modest but fitting to me). Butti leaves the theme of support, and transforms Bernini's quite literal quantification of the globe as 'small' compared to the King's greatness into an evocation of virtue and ethical decorum, suggesting that Louis accepts the world as a fitting habitat despite its modesty. The King no longer overshadows the world with his size, but inclines himself to the conditions imposed by sublunar existence. Both Chantelou and Butti propose to circumscribe and temper Bernini's *concetto* by casting the ensemble as a dynamic comparison between the world and the King 'qui laisse à penser' along the lines of *Nec pluribus impar*, rather than the fixed image of the King perched on top of a small globe.

The topic of the pedestal appears again in the *Journal* six days later, on 19 September, when Butti reads out the first of the two poems on Bernini's pedestal that La Chambre and Domenico would quote.⁴⁸ Butti seems to have come round to Bernini's point of view, as his poem sanctions Bernini's inscription by explaining the underlying *concetto* that '[a] small base for such a monarch is the world'. According to Chantelou, on 26 September the abbot Amable de Bourzé provided the witty answer that La Chambre and Domenico would cast as Bernini's immediate response to first poem.⁴⁹ Reversing the roles of Bernini and Butti since their discussion on 13 September, this poem dismisses in the artist's name Butti's poetic explanation. The theme of the pedestal is not the small world supporting the King, but Louis himself as a second Hercules who carries the world. The ensemble of bust and pedestal, the poem implies, represents the apotheosis of the sublime monarch on whom the world depends.⁵⁰

Welt (München: 2006) 61–78, here 64–65; idem, "Kontroversen um Berninis Königsbüste", in Schneider P. – Zitzlsperger P. (eds.), *Bernini in Paris: das Tagebuch des Paul Féart de Chantelou über den Aufenthalt Gianlorenzo Berninis am Hof Ludwigs XIV* (Berlin: 2006) 397–414, here 407–409.

⁴⁷ Chantelou, *Journal de voyage du Cavalier Bernin* 171: 'Je lui ai dit que sa pensée se rapporte encore heureusement à la devise du Roi, dont le corps est un soleil avec le mot : *Nec pluribus impar*, et que ce piédestal est le plus grand qu'on pouvait imaginer...'.

⁴⁸ Chantelou, *Journal de voyage du Cavalier Bernin* 189.

⁴⁹ Chantelou, *Journal de voyage du Cavalier Bernin* 203.

⁵⁰ On the herculean themes in Bernini's works for Louis XIV, see Lavin, "Bernini's Image". The 'Hercule Gallois' is an important topos in panegyric devoted to the King.

When Domenico composed the opening sentence of his *Vita* he was unaware of the larger discussion that framed the two poems printed by La Chambre, as he did not know Chantelou's *Journal* which circulated in Paris but remained in manuscript until the late 19th century.⁵¹ Yet he was quite probably familiar with another author who had used La Chambre's texts, Dominique Bouhours. His *Manière de bien penser dans les ouvrages de l'esprit* of 1687 quotes the three pages of the *Éloge* describing Bernini's bust and the equestrian.⁵² The *Manière* was very widely read in Europe and a major voice in the *querelle* opposing Italian and French theorists of literary style in the late 17th and early 18th century; in 1704 Giovan Gioseffe Orsi published his *Considerazioni sopra un famoso libro francese intitolato 'La Manière de bien penser dans les Ouvrages de l'esprit'*, a work intended as the united answer of the major Italian critics and cultural institutions against Bouhours' proclamation of French superiority in literary matters that will be briefly discussed below.⁵³ The *Manière* is also an early and influential treatise on the sublime style. Viewed as 'noble simplicité,' Bouhours' sublime connects the nobility of the ode or the epic with the straightforwardness and clarity of the 'low' style.⁵⁴ In the *Manière*, as in La Chambre, the King is the greatest subject of all, and Bouhours' discussion of the sublime goes a long way in defining an aesthetic of royal greatness.

⁵¹ On the transmission history of the poems, see Montanari, "Pierre Cureau de la Chambre" 111 and note 56; also Chantelou, *Journal de voyage du Cavalier Bernin* 189, note 1 and 203, note 2; Del Pesco D., *Bernini in Francia. Paul de Chantelou e il Journal de voyage du cavalier Bernin en France* (Naples: 2007) 393, note 228. La Chambre may have known the poems from Chantelou's manuscript or (perhaps more plausibly) from a manuscript collection of poems in honour of Louis XIV, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Mélanges Colbert 37.

⁵² Bouhours D., *La Manière de bien penser dans les Ouvrages d'esprit* (Hildesheim and New York: 1974) 364–365 follows Cureau de la Chambre, "Préface" 123–125. Vanuxem J., "Quelques témoignages français sur le Bernin et son Art – l'abbé de la Chambre", *Actes des Journées Internationales d'Étude du Baroque, Montauban, 1963, publiés par l'Association des Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Toulouse avec le concours du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*, Baroque, Série A, 2 (Toulouse: 1965) 153–167, here 166 was the first to point out that the poems on the pedestal were cited by Bouhours.

⁵³ Viola, *Tradizioni letterarie a confronto* 61–76 and especially 138–290. The *Manière* evinces a profound knowledge of Italian literature on style, and frequently quotes the work of Sforza Pallavicino, whom Domenico casts as one of Bernini's closest friends. Domenico himself was a reputed author, and it is hard to imagine that he would have been unaware of a famous attack on Italian literary style that inspired a flurry of publications and took swipes at his own father as well.

⁵⁴ On Bouhours, the sublime and the *Manière de bien penser*, see, besides Viola, a.o. Hache S., *La langue du ciel: le sublime en France au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: 2000) 275–283; Cronk N., *The classical Sublime: French Neoclassicism and the Language of Literature* (Charlottesville: 2003) 132–136.

The book consists of four dialogues between two friends, Philanthe, an enthusiastic defender of novelty, and Eudoxe, the more moderate voice of Bouhours. They discuss how a *pensée* (an ingenious thought or expression) can be founded in truth, distinguish the three genres of *pensées*, examine the appropriate application of each genre, and finally determine the desired clarity of a *pensée*. The three genres are the sublime, the *agréable*, and the *délicat*, each appropriate for a different kind of subject. Their application depends on 'convenance': 'il faut penser selon la matière qu'on traite.'⁵⁵ Because 'the subject of the Prince LOUIS elevates the spirits,' he is the sublime subject par excellence, as many poems casting the King as the compendium of heroic virtue attest.⁵⁶

The third dialogue addresses the problem that, even when the right style is chosen with regard to the subject, the appropriate style can lead to excess. The interlocutors examine the limits of invention or 'pensée' in each of the three genres or literary *modi*: they try to agree when the sublime is prone to 'un excès de grandeur,' or when too much 'agrément' is added to the 'agréable,' or when the 'délicat' degenerates into 'une vaine subtilité.'⁵⁷ The cases discussed to determine the tipping point of greatness are comparisons of emperors and monarchs with very large things, primarily the world, and the reader is presented with a plethora of ancient and modern antecedents to Bernini's and Butti's *pensées*, such as 'Alexander orbi magnus est; Alexandro orbis angustus est,' from the *Suasoriae* of Seneca the Elder, or an epigram on the occasion of the death of Philips IV, 'Aita o cieli! or che vacilla il mondo,' all applauded as appropriate sublime expressions.⁵⁸

When the interlocutors turn to the 'error of being too grand in grand things,'⁵⁹ Philanthe attempts to argue that 'small works of poetry' should not be subjected to the rigorous rules of epic poetry.⁶⁰ Eudoxe immediately replies that 'As soon as these small works . . . are grave and serious,

⁵⁵ Bouhours, *Manière* 109.

⁵⁶ Bouhours, *Manière* 145–58, with the quote on 145: 'le sujet du Prince LOUIS élève les esprits'.

⁵⁷ Bouhours, *Manière* 327.

⁵⁸ Bouhours, *Manière* 327–342, with the quotations on 329 and 342.

⁵⁹ Bouhours, *Manière* 343: '... & souvenez-vous que c'est un défaut, non seulement d'estre grand dans les petites choses, mais d'estre trop grand dans les grandes'.

⁶⁰ Bouhours, *Manière* 361: 'Je ne crois pas, dit Philanthe, que les petits ouvrages de poésie soyent assujétis aux règles rigoureuses des poèmes Epiques'. This point is more important than it might seem. The discussion on literary ornament is closely related to the debate on epic poetry, and the respective contributions of Italian and French authors to the genre. The question is whether in order to celebrate heroic virtue and, their King, French authors should adopt Italian epic models, with their penchant for ornament, or

they should be as precise as the grand poems with regard to the *pensées*. Hyperbole and exaggeration that are not within the rules should be banished from them.' Bouhours then incorporates La Chambre's rendition of the poems on the pedestal.⁶¹ They particularly smack of the 'sublime vicieux,' Eudoxe points out, because they manage to exaggerate even the greatness of the King beyond the bounds of reason, by means of a petty and actually ridiculous comparison: '... what is less grand, and less solid than saying that an entire world is too small a base for such a Monarch; or that he who supports the world, does not need support?'⁶²

This criticism is aimed at the poems explaining the pedestal, but in the process brings down the contraption itself as well. The poetic exaggeration, so Bouhours, bares the weakness of the underlying invention and by extension Bernini's artistic capacities. Bernini and his coterie of poets are no near equals of Louis peering into the heart of greatness but artists with a dim understanding of the sublime who produce ridiculous and fragile images of the King.

Art and the Sublime

Bouhours' critic Orsi addresses hyperbole in the fifth dialogue of his *Considerazioni* on the *Manière*, which deals with the sublime. As Corrado Viola points out, Orsi's deference to the ancients induces him to employ Longinus and Boileau's translation to attack Bouhours.⁶³ To Orsi a *pensée* or *pensiero*, including the sublime, exists on the level of elocution and stands in a rather loose relation to the idea it expresses. In fact, Orsi uses Eudoxe's introduction to the epigrams on the pedestal to casti-

develop their own epic style, or revert to the new ideal of the sublime style, which is at once simple and elevated, see Viola, *Tradizioni letterarie a confronto*.

⁶¹ Bouhours, *Manière* 363–364: 'Tout cela me fait souvenir du Cavalier Bernin, dit Philanthe: il fut appelé en France pour le dessein du Louvre, & il fit le Buste du Roy en marbre. Ce buste luy attira l'applaudissement de toute la Cour, & donne lieu à un Poète d'Italie de faire des vers sur le pié-d'estal qui n'estoit pas encore fait. *Entrò Bernino in un pensier'profondo, / Per far al Reggio busto un'bel'sostegno: / E disse, non trovandone alcun degno; / Piccola basa à un'tal'Monarca è il Mondo.* A quoy le Bernin répondit luy-mesme: *Mai mi sovenne quel'pensier'profondo, / per far'di Ré si grande appoggio degno; / Van sarebbe il pensier', che di sostegno / Non è mestier, à chi sostiene il mondo.*'

⁶² Bouhours, *Manière* 364: '... qu'y a-t-il de moins grand, et de moins solide que de dire, qu'un monde entier est une trop petite base pour un tel Monarque; ou que celui qui soutient le monde, n'a pas besoin de soutien?'

⁶³ Viola, *Tradizioni letterarie a confronto* 245–249.

gate Bouhours' conflation of 'convénance' according to subject or literary genre.⁶⁴ Orsi reverts to a traditional notion of genre, meaning that the same subject can be treated in different ways. By defending this latitude between subject and style, he implies that there exist no subjects beyond the vicissitudes of circumstance. If this point harks back to Italian poetics of the 16th and 17th century, it also indicates Orsi's distance from a subject like Louis XIV, Bouhours' epitome of the sublime. As a result, he is also much more lenient towards the trope of hyperbole or exaggeration, perfectly appropriate for certain subjects under particular circumstances. Moreover, the sublime does not imitate nature but enhances it, so the requirement of verisimilitude forms no objection against exaggeration. The ultimate criterion for the application of hyperbole, Orsi writes, is good taste.⁶⁵

In his defense of exaggeration, Orsi makes no reference to the poems on the pedestal. After all, the *Considerazioni* aims at a rehabilitation of the ancient canon and Italy's greatest authors, not every piece of poetry mentioned by Bouhours. But it should not be excluded that Orsi agreed with Bouhours' dismissal of Bernini and would have found the epigrams and the pedestal of less than impeccable taste. He belonged to the circles that distanced themselves from the ornate poetry of the Seicento, soon to be associated with the art and architecture of the Roman baroque.⁶⁶ The task of Bernini's rehabilitation fell to Domenico. In his *Vita*, written in the same years when Orsi was working on the *Considerazioni*, Bernini is cast as capable of erecting the most solid of pedestals by dint of his virtue and merit alone. This virtual pedestal lifts him to the realm of the sublime, just like the small globe would have elevated Bernini's mirror image, Louis XIV, above the fray of mortal men.

Tracing Gianlorenzo Bernini's relation to Louis XIV in the biographies of La Chambre and Domenico and the treatise of Bouhours has revealed a network of intertexts. Bouhours employs La Chambre's praise of Bernini's royal portraits to criticize the vice of exaggeration. Domenico, on the

⁶⁴ I have used Orsi G.-G., *Considerazioni sopra un famoso libro franzese intitolato La Manière de bien penser dans les Ouvrages de l'esprit* (Modena: 1735) here I, 129. Orsi quotes Eudoxe's point that "Dés que ces petits ouvrages . . . sont graves & sérieux, ils doivent être aussi exacts que les grands poèmes pour ce qui regarde les pensées."

⁶⁵ Orsi, *Considerazioni* 151–159.

⁶⁶ See Payne A.A., "Architectural Criticism, Science, and Visual Eloquence: Teofilo Gallaccini in Seventeenth-Century Florence", *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58 (1999) 146 note 10.

other hand, lifts La Chambre's careful distinction between the artist and the King and treats them as *composti* of equal mettle. Finally, Domenico explains his biographical project in terms recalling Bernini's ideas about the pedestal for the bust and in so doing vindicates his father's view of the King against Bouhours. As a result, three different models emerge, each with their own distance between the artist and the monarch, and between art and its elevated subject. In all three accounts Louis XIV retains the same position: he is sublime, a vast compendium of virtues. In Domenico, nudged on by La Chambre, this model of kingship serves to reinvigorate and expand an older notion of artistic genius unbound by rules and guided by higher insight. This *composto* shares many characteristics with the sublime as it was defined in the early 18th century, even if Domenico does not relate the notion directly to the effect of Bernini's work on the beholder. Moreover, by then Bernini's style had become associated with poetic excess.⁶⁷ Bouhours, on the other hand, is already firmly implied in proto-aesthetics when he discusses the sublime style and its proper application.⁶⁸ This style is not the idiom of the Roman baroque. The real question for Bouhours is how the sublime, the attribute of kings and gods, fits into the realm of art. When art is not performed by elevated beings but mortal men, Bouhours implies, one does well to temper one's imagination, and let the subject speak for itself.

⁶⁷ Implicitly, Domenico draws a straight line between Bernini's exceptional artistry and the astounding effect of his works, most notably so for the Baldacchino in St Peter's, see Delbeke, "Gianlorenzo Bernini's 'bel composto'".

⁶⁸ Bouhours, *Manière* 107: 'La sublimité, la grandeur dans une pensée est justement ce qui emporte, & ce qui ravit, . . .'

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“ONE NEVER SEES MONSTERS WITHOUT EXPERIENCING EMOTION”
LE MERVEILLEUX AND THE SUBLIME IN THEORIES
ON FRENCH PERFORMING ARTS (1650–1750)

Stijn Bussels and Bram Van Oostveldt

I note with sadness that one of the beauties of the lyric theatre is neglected and is falling steadily into a highly regrettable decline. This is, quite frankly, a shameful thing for an enlightened century like ours. Dear me! When monsters are used in a *tragédie* [lyrique], they are so puny, so clumsy that they simply make you feel sorry for them (...) I was at a performance of *Persée* at the court theatre. It has to be admitted (...) that the *Persées* have improved themselves beyond recognition, and yet, by an incredible contrast, the monsters no longer arouse any interest. They have nothing to characterize them, nothing which in former times used to cause that delicious tingly feeling we call goose flesh. People will reply, perhaps, that this decline to which I take exception is quite immaterial, that monsters no longer attract the attention of the public, who regard them as mere sleight out of hand. Yet I maintain – and several ladies of this province agree with me – that one never sees monsters without experiencing emotion. What potential to stir up violent feelings in the spectator’s heart if the monsters were as they should be! But what kind of a monster is it which, with two paws about the size of my fan, tries to terrify Andromeda who is prepared to laugh in its face.(...) To be honest, it seems high time that several rules, several fixed principles on the deployment of monsters, were added to the system of poetics. Every sea monster, for example, should be at least 18 feet long by 6 feet wide with an aperture in its head that could gobble up a twenty year-old; how ridiculous a monster seems if it is reduced to snapping like a common guard dog. That is truly ignoble!¹

This is a letter from 1747 to the *Mercure de France* of an alleged Burgundian lady of qualities. Her complaint against the deplorable state of the monsters in the *tragédie lyrique* or *tragédie en musique* – an opera genre introduced by Lully and Quinault in 1673 – is most probably ironical. In the Enlightened century, this pretended lady from a provincial salon worries about the deteriorating theatrical representation of monsters. She

¹ “Lettre sur les Monstres, adressée aux Auteurs du Mercure par une Dame de qualité de Bourgogne”, *Mercure de France* (April 1747), quoted in: Wood C. – Sandler G., *French Baroque Opera. A Reader* (Aldershot: 2000) 125.

puts that it is necessary that one never sees monsters without experiencing emotion. The monsters on stage should launch heroic actions, such as Perseus' rescue of Andromeda. However, the monsters used in the performances which the alleged lady saw were so trivial that their threat is restricted to the minimum. The actual effect of the monsters is deemed as utterly ridiculous.

Although the lady claims that in past times the theatrical monsters had been far better represented, in reviews and reflections on the French stage of the mid-seventeenth and eighteenth century the ridiculing of monsters and other machinery and the complaint for their failure were commonplace. La Fontaine, for example, wrote in 1677 that it was not infrequent in performances of operas that the flying chariot of a god broke down and that the singer was clinging on a rope crying for help.² During the heights of the *tragédie lyrique*, theatre machinery was increasingly used and their failures all the more discussed. A letter of 1727 on the Paris reprise of *Bellérophon* by Lully-Quinault (1679), reports that a huge dragon suddenly fell apart while from its stomach a half-naked boy appeared who was operating the machine.³ Even in Rousseau's *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* from 1761, we read ironical comments on the use of flying gods and threatening monsters in the opera.⁴

Despite those frequent comments on the use of machinery in French lyrical theatre, the letter to the *Mercur de France* points at the fact that the ideal employment of monsters and other impressive machinery on French music theatre nonetheless could cause this special feeling called 'goose flesh' and which could 'stir up violent feelings in the spectator's heart'. The only way this could be achieved is when, 'several rules, several fixed principles on the deployment of monsters were added to the system of poetics.' Therefore, the idea comes to the fore that the use of machinery can be evaluated following specific rules and principles. If these are complied with, the delightful horror on stage can be fully appreciated.

This essay will deal with the aspired effect of excessive machinery in theories on French performing arts from 1650 until 1750. As we will try to make clear, many theatre critics put forward that machinery and scenography could arouse an intensive response. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the ideal onlooker had to be able to get totally

² Fontaine, Jean de la, "Epistre à Mr. de Niert", in *Œuvres Diverses* (Paris: 1958) 617.

³ Voltaire, *Lettres de Mlle Aïssé à Madame C.* [Calandrini] (Paris: 1787 (1727)) 80.

⁴ Rousseau J.J., "Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse", in *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: 1961) II, 283–286.

overwhelmed with all supernatural marvel and horror displayed, but at the same time was expected to take the technical and artistic ingenuity into regard by taking a rational distance. Starting from Abbé d'Aubignac's *Pratique du théâtre* (1657), the aspired effect of marvel, horror and aesthetic pleasure was named with the term *le merveilleux*. Strikingly, seventeen years later Nicolas Boileau introduces this term as a synonym for the sublime in his famous translation of Longinus' *Peri Hupsous: Traité du sublime ou le merveilleux dans le discours* (1674). From that moment on the defenders of the genre of the *tragédie lyrique* gave an interpretation of the term *le merveilleux* which differed significantly from D'Aubignac's use. This change closely fits with Boileau's use of the term, as in both contexts the term is used to indicate that astonishment and great emotional transport are linked without emphasising the rational distance. Therefore, it is just as striking that not a single writer made a connection between Boileau's *merveilleux* in literature and rhetoric and *le merveilleux* in the discussions on the *tragédie lyrique*. In this essay, we will try to elucidate why both concepts named with the same term are not explicitly related to one another although they cover a very similar effect.

Poetics of Machines

Therefore, we can first look at the poetics of the theatre machinery and turn to the mid-seventeenth century, when sumptuous scenery and excessive machinery became characteristic for the French lyrical theatre. The use of excessive machinery became popular in France when Mazarin in 1645 took Giacomo Torelli to stage in Paris Giulio Strozzi's *La Finta Pazza* and especially when he hired the Vigarani family from Modena to build in 1662 in the Palais des Tuileries a *Salle des Machines* for *ballets de cour*, *pièces à machines* and *tragédies lyrique*.

However, even before the Italians arrived with their excessive machinery we can read already in Jules de la Mesnardière's *Poétique* from 1640 an extensive chapter on 'L'appareil ou disposition du theatre'.⁵ He subjects the use of machinery to classicist rules in general and to the rule of *vraisemblance* in particular: "Il faut raisonner sur l' Economie de la Scène, & voir si les beaux Spectacles que fournissent les Perspectives, les Grottes, les Bois, les Palais, & les autres agencemens, ne sont point contre

⁵ Mesnardière Jules de la, *Poétique* (Paris, A. de Sommaville: 1639) 410–420.

la raison, ni contre la vraisemblance.»⁶ When, for example, a prison is to be represented on stage, like the one in Sophocles' *Antigone*, this should be executed in a "horrible and cruel way, following the intention of the fable".⁷ Only when machinery and scenography is applied in a correct way, prison scenes will have an appropriate effect on the spectator. This correct way means that, according to De la Mesnardière, it should be a place in which one is clearly enclosed like in an obscure cavern, that it is supplied with bars and that the gloomy darkness of it is accentuated with occasional flashes of lightening. The more enclosed this prison looks, the greater the effect on the spectator. He might even burst out in tears upon the lamentable fate of Antigone.⁸

Those detailed prescriptions for the use of machinery and scenography in order to create a maximum effect on the audience, can also be noticed in Claude François Ménéstrier's *Traite des Tournois, Ioustes, Carroussels, et autres Spectacles publics* from 1664 and in Michel de Pure's *Idées des Spectacles anciens et nouveaux* from 1668. Whereas Ménéstrier gives us detailed descriptions on the different sorts of machinery,⁹ De Pure elaborates on the effects machinery produces on the spectator. The latter makes a distinction between the effect of the exterior and interior of the theatre machines. Seeing a new machine during the performance always "frappe les sens" and creates much surprise.¹⁰ Thanks to its newness, the spectators forget the representational status and think to see the subject represented in an unmediated way. The theatre goers are totally taken away by the machine's overwhelming outer appearance. In this way, the viewers are deceived and experience similar emotions to the ones as if they would have seen a real monster.

But if the more experienced spectator takes a second and more careful look at the machineries, when newness has given place to habituation, a totally different astonishment is aroused, an astonishment over the interior of the machine. Then the genius design can be taken into account. The onlooker focuses on the way the theatre machine creates movement and animates. He regards this with great admiration. De Pure describes the evaluation of the mechanics of the machinery as far more interesting than

⁶ Ibid. 416.

⁷ Ibid. 417.

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ Ménéstrier Claude François, *Traite des Tournois, Ioustes, Carroussels, et autres Spectacles publics* (Lyon, J. Mugeut: 1669) 141–154.

¹⁰ Pure Michel de, *Idées des spectacles anciens et nouveaux* (Paris, M. Brunet: 1668) 306–308.

the evaluation of the mere outer appearance. The former reveals spiritual beauty that is the true soul of the "enchantemens naturels".¹¹ The idea that the inner working of the machines is a spiritual form of beauty reveals a Cartesian epistemological point of view that rationalises the overwhelming effects of machinery and counterbalances its delusive force. For the spectator who looks beyond the impressive outer effect machinery can cause on the senses, a true world of mechanisms is revealed that equals the way nature in general functions.

In this context, it should not come as a surprise that Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle takes in the *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (1686) the machinery of the lyrical theatre as an apt metaphor to discuss the *aemulatio* of modern French over ancient Greek philosophy:

Toute la philosophie (...) n'est fondé que sur deux choses: sur ce qu'on a l'esprit curieux & les yeux mauvais. (...) Sur cela je me figure toujours que la Nature est un grand Spectacle qui ressemble à celui de l'Opera. Du lieu où vous êtes à l'Opera, vous ne voyez pas le Théâtre tout-à-fait comme il est ; on a disposé les Decorations & les Machines pour faire de loin un effet agréable, & on cache à votre vuë ces rouës & ces contrepoids qui font tous les mouvemens. Aussi ne vous embarrassez-vous guère de deviner comment tout cela joüe. Il n'y a peut-être que quelque Machiniste caché dans le parterre, qui s'inquiete d'un Vol qui lui aura paru extraordinaire & qui veut absolument démêler comment ce Vol a été exécuté. Vous voyez bien que ce Machiniste-là est assez fait comme les Philosophes. Mais ce qui à l'égard des Philosophes augmente la difficulté, c'est que dans les Machines que la Nature presente à nos yeux, les cordes sont parfaitement bien cachés (...) Car representez-vous tous les Sages à l'Opera, ces Pythagores, ces Platons, ces Aristotes & tous ces gens dont le noms fait aujourd'hui tant de bruit à nos oreilles; supposons qu'ils voyoient le Vol de Phaëton que les Vents enlevent, qu'ils ne pouvoient découvrir les cordes, & qu'ils ne sçavoient point comment le derriere du Théâtre étoit disposé. L'un d'eux disoit *c'est une certaine vertue secrete qui enleve Phaëton*. L'autre *Phaëton est composé de certains nombres qui le font monter*. L'autre, *Phaëton a une certaine amitié pour le haut du Theatre; il n'est point à son aise quand il n'y est pas*. L'autre *Phaëton n'est pas fait pour voler, mais il aime mieux voler que de laisser le haut du Theatre vide*. (...) A la fin Descartes, & quelques autres Modernes sont venus, qui ont dit: *Phaëton monte, parce qu'il est tiré par des cordes, & un poids plus pesant que lui descend*.¹²

¹¹ Ibid., 301–302.

¹² Bovier de Fontenelle Bernard le, *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (Paris, M. Brunet: 1724) 21–24 (italics by Fontenelle). Cf. Lazardig J., "Die Maschine als Spektakel. Funktion und Admiration im Mashinendenken des 17. Jahrhunderts", in Schramm H. –

In an almost equally ironic tone as the Burgundian lady, Fontenelle uses theatre machinery as an evident topos for deception of the senses. Even the most intelligent Greeks would not have been able to evaluate correctly the impressive images the machines in the lyrical theatre evoke. Modern French philosophy however, in which observation is always questioned by ratio, is the only way to look at opera or to look at the spectacle of nature and to attain true insights.

Although modern French philosophical view causes a rational experience of the machinery in the theatre, it also disenchant the world of illusions and in the end tends to refute the momentary effect of totally overwhelming surprise that the use of machinery can cause upon the spectator. De Pure clearly relates to this Cartesian epistemological point of view by saying that the surprising effect of machinery can only be a visual experience, since our eyes “ne portent point leurs regards plus loin que les objets visibles, & qui prendront pour une corvée la peine de penser au moyen dont les choses se font.”¹³ According then to Cartesian epistemology the astonishing effect of machinery depends on a sweet lie that is put in front of our eyes. This lie will only be believed by the inexperienced spectator while the more experienced viewer has a rational and distanced explanation for the overwhelming effect of machinery.

Le merveilleux: *A delightful horror*

Within this distinction of experience the Abbé d'Aubignac presents a strikingly new insight. In the *Pratique du théâtre* (1657), he also presents the same two types of spectators.¹⁴ The one is defined as the common man who is overwhelmed and enchanted by the machinery, the other is the privy spectator who is able to discern the artifice of the machines. The ideal spectatorship paradoxically unites both types in the experience of machines in the theatre. Naivety of the spectator is needed to be overwhelmed by the machine, while being aware of its artifice in its own turn causes the connoisseur to admire the artistry itself.

Schwarte L. – Lazardig J. (eds.), *Instrumente in Kunst und Wissenschaft. Zur Architektonik kultureller Grenzen im 17. Jahrhundert* (Berlin-New York: 2004) 167–193.

¹³ De Pure, *Idées des spectacles* 302.

¹⁴ Aubignac Abbé d', *Pratique du théâtre*, ed. P. Martino (Genève: 1996) 483–492.

In this discussion, the use of machinery is caught up around the term *le merveilleux*. The use of machinery and scenery are for D'Aubignac the most 'touching sensibilities' of the 'ingenious Magic' of the theatre. It ravishes us, it brings heroes and an infinity of wonders before our eyes while at the very same time we are well aware that it is only an illusion.¹⁵ However, illusion as hallucination is for D'Aubignac not the main aim. It only draws on vertigo, while his ideal of a classicist illusion constitutes a "magie théâtrale" of which one knows the secrets and magic spells but still goes along with them. This is characterized by D'Aubignac as the essence of theatrical *merveilleux*.¹⁶

Therefore, D'Aubignac's use of *le merveilleux* is not to be described in simple terms of deception. From his point of view *le merveilleux* constitutes a more complex set of ideas concerning visuality in the theatre. Strong fascination over the machinery and its overwhelming effect should always be recognized by the viewer in terms of an awe-inspiring, but aesthetic pleasure. On the one hand his naivety is addressed in the way that he is overwhelmed by what he sees. On the other hand the translation of this overpowering effect into aesthetic pleasure requires a certain distance between the spectator and the subject that is represented, a distance defined by the knowledge of the representational status of the object on stage.

This oscillation between attachment and distance is particularly noticeable when D'Aubignac discusses the representation of horrible subjects on the stage, such as monsters. Although he clearly follows the classicist rule of *bienséance* – refuting the visual excesses of the *tragédie sanglante* which too overtly performed diverse bloody cruelties and resulted in total perplexity for the onlookers – he nonetheless recognizes the aesthetic possibilities of the horrible. Explicitly referring to the humanist scholar Scaliger who stated like Aristotle that one can look at paintings that are horrible, but nonetheless experience the pleasure of the recognition of the subject represented.¹⁷ D'Aubignac also describes the aesthetic pleasure of the horrible in terms of distance and recognition:

Ce n'est pas que je veuille empêcher le Poète d'y mettre les choses, qui dans la Nature seraient épouvantables, monstrueuses et horribles; mais il

¹⁵ Ibid., 483–484.

¹⁶ Ibid., 483, note 221.

¹⁷ "Non in leatitia sola jucunditas, picturarum quoque facies horribiles nihilo secius spectantur et juvant." Scaliger quoted in Aubignac, *Pratique du théâtre* 488.

faut que l'artifice les exprime si bien; que la peinture puisse donner du contentement; comme le Tableau d'une Vieille, ou d'un Mourant, est souvent si excellement fait qu'il est sans prix, encore que personne ne voulût être en l'état des choses représentées.¹⁸

The idea that the truthful visual representation on the theatre of the horrible can evoke strong emotions with the viewer, but can also give aesthetic pleasure, places the concept of *le merveilleux* within a general poetical discourse. For D'Aubignac the Aristotelian rules do not contrast with *le merveilleux*. In what follows, we will see that writers on the *tragédie lyrique* will present a different belief. However, first we will have to concentrate on how far we can bring together this mixture of horror and aesthetic pleasure, one of the characteristic effects of D'Aubignac's *merveilleux*, with Boileau's *sublime ou le merveilleux dans le discours*.

The sublime and the literalization of the theatre

As we already briefly indicated, Nicolas Boileau relates the sublime and the term *merveilleux* in the title of the Longinus translation, *Traité du sublime ou le merveilleux dans le discours*. Boileau's translation of and his interpretative preface to the *Peri Hupsous* is a decisive point in the history of the concept of the sublime. After its publication in 1674, the sublime becomes a major topic in French criticism.¹⁹ Because of the fact that Boileau describes the sublime *dans le discours* and because of the enormous influence of his *traité*, it is important to notice that the sublime in France during this period is foremost discussed as a literary and rhetoric quality.

The sublime as a literary and rhetoric category is accentuated by the distinction Boileau makes between *le style sublime* and *le sublime*. With the sublime style Boileau refers to the rhetorical doctrine of the three styles or *genera dicendi* as explained in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Cicero's *De oratore* and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*. The sublime style or 'genus sublime' was characterized by noble and solemn speech and its use of tropes and figures.²⁰ Boileau makes this distinction between sublime and sublime style because he fears that his contemporaries might take the

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ Kerslake L., *Essays on the Sublime* (Bern: 2000) 26–27.

²⁰ Kerslake, *Essays on the Sublime* 43–44.

sublime as an appeal for the heavy, bombastic style. As spokesman of *les Anciens*, he considered that as one of the most typical and reprehensible excesses of *les Modernes*.²¹ According to Boileau, Longinus meant something totally different with the sublime than what rhetoricians have called the sublime style:

Par le sublime, Longin entend cet extraordinaire et ce *merveilleux* qui frappe dans le discours, et qui fait qu'un ouvrage enlève, ravit, transporte. (...) (L)e sublime se peut trouver dans une seule pensée, dans une seule figure, dans un seul tour de paroles. Une chose peut être dans le style sublime, et n'être pourtant pas sublime, c'est-à-dire n'avoir rien d'extraordinaire ni de surprenant.²²

It is important here to stress that Boileau in his reading of the sublime focuses foremost on the effects the sublime produces on the reader or the audience. The verbs *enlever*, *ravir* and *transporter* are used to describe the effect of the sublime on the reader or listener, while *surprenant* refers to the immediacy with which the sublime operates.²³ In repeating Longinus, Boileau states that in this combination, the sublime produces an ecstatic effect on the reader. This ecstatic effect has nothing to do with sumptuous style. On the contrary, *le style sublime* will draw the attention to the artfulness or even artificiality of the language and will finally diminish the persuasiveness of what is said. The rapidity or the *surprenant* that is so typical for the sublime is best achieved in simplicity of style. Short phrases like "Fiat lux" from *Genesis* or "Qu'il mourût" from Corneille's *Horace* are exemplary and even thought 'natural' for the immediate and emotional effect of the sublime.²⁴

Boileau's *merveilleux* differs distinctively from D'Aubignac's *merveilleux*. First of all, Boileau's conception of *le merveilleux* has no longer regards for the rational aspect of observation as was the case with d'Aubignac. The ideal double spectatorship in which the requested naivety is followed by the admiration of the connoisseur over the artistry itself, is no longer a characteristic for *le merveilleux*. On the contrary, for Boileau the sublime

²¹ "Ces hommes accoutumés aux débauches et aux excès des poètes modernes, et qui n'admirent que ce qu'ils n'entendent point, ne pensent pas qu'un auteur se soit élevé, s'ils ne l'ont entièrement perdu de vue." Boileau-Despréaux N., "Le traité du sublime ou le merveilleux dans le discours – Préface", in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: 1966) 337.

²² Ibid., 338.

²³ Kerslake, *Essays on the Sublime* 54–55.

²⁴ "Il n'y a personne qui ne sente la grandeur héroïque qui est renfermée dans ce mot, *Qu'il mourût*, qui est d'autant plus sublime, qu'il est simple et naturel. (...) C'est la simplicité même de ce mot qui en fait la grandeur." Boileau, "Le traité du sublime" 340.

is this specific quality of art that has its astonishing and ravishing effect on the audience because it is able to conceal its artifice. Secondly, classicist doctrine as synthesized by Boileau restricted the possibility of a theatrical sublime only within language and thus literarized the theatre. Contrary to d'Aubignac, who described *le merveilleux* as a performative quality Boileau's *merveilleux* remains in the exclusive domain of the dramatic text.

Evocative speech

Although classicist performance practice tended to follow this literalisation of the theatre, especially in the established genres of tragedy and comedy, several theorists disputed the idea that the performance is measured only on literary grounds. For this argument we first have to look at the discussion on evocative speech since Boileau's translation of Longinus. In his *Dialogues sur l'éloquence*, published in 1718 but written in 1679, François de Fénelon criticizes in a similar way like Boileau the ornamental rhetoric and verbal virtuosity of the sublime style.²⁵ Fénelon conceives effective rhetoric as invisible rhetoric that draws away the attention of the mediating presence of the speaker or language in order to create a sublime experience within the listener or reader. But contrary to Boileau who stresses the simplicity of style to achieve the sublime, Fénelon draws more on classical ideas on the visualization of speech as the most effective strategy for creating a sublime experience. In this sense he remains closer to Longinus' treatise on rhetoric where the intensely visual character of the sublime is accentuated by means of architectural and pictorial metaphors.²⁶ This same distinct relation to visuality is found in Fénelon, stating that the poet's talent consists foremost in the possibility to paint with words: "[L]a poésie n'est autre chose qu'une fiction qui peint la nature. (...) Peindre, c'est non-seulement décrire les choses, mais en représenter les circonstances d'une manière si vive et si sensible, que l'auditeur s'imagine presque les voir." Because of this "le poète disparaît ;

²⁵ See also Worvill R.M., "Seeing Speech: Illusion and the Transformation of Dramatic Writing in Diderot and Lessing", *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 9 (2005) 29–44

²⁶ Eck C. van, *Classical Rhetoric and the Visual Arts in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: 2007) 117.

on ne voit plus que ce qu'il fait voir, on n'entend plus ceux qu'il fait parler. Voilà la force de l'imitation et de la peinture."²⁷

Visualization of speech as a means to conceal the artifice in art and finally to achieve the sublime, poses some particular problems when transposed to the theatre and drama. Just like poetry and painting, neoclassical theatre and drama is characterized by its 'closed form'.²⁸ This means that the presence of neither author nor performer should be unveiled or become susceptible as the mediators of the plot because they would destroy the fiction of illusion and immediate presence. But paradoxically, when theatre is literalized, as was the case in classicist performance practice that refuted visual abundance, this threatens to be the case. The dramatic poet, contrary to the epic poet, speaks not directly to his readers or listeners. He can not take part in what his characters have to do or say. This means that all ideas of the dramatic poet, be it for the decoration of the theatre or be it for the movements of the characters have to be expressed by the verses the characters recite.²⁹ Precisely because classicist doctrine has literalized theatre so much, there is the danger that the poet becomes visible through his characters and that thus artifice in art is revealed.

This is exactly the argument Antoine Houdar de La Motte made in his plea for prose verse within tragedy, a plea that will acknowledge the theatre no longer as an exclusive literary genre, but as a visual art as well. La Motte made his point within a debate with Boileau on Thérémène's recit in Racine's *Phèdre* (1677). Here, La Motte repeats the classicist rule that the dramatic poet can only speak indirectly to the public, by means of his characters, but comes to a totally different conclusion. Because of the use of verse in tragedy, instead of prose, it happens too often that poets reveal their art and thus destroy the *vraisemblance* in the theatre. As an example in which this is apparent, he refers to Thérémène's description of the threatening arrival of the monster:

L'onde approche, se brise, et vomit à nos yeux,
Parmi des flots de l'écume, un monstre furieux.
Son front large est armé de cornes menaçantes,
Tout son corps est couverts d'écailles jaunissantes,
Indomptable taureau, dragon impétueux,
Sa croupe se recourbe en replis tortueux.

²⁷ Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon, François de, *Œuvres* (Paris: 1983) I, 34–36.

²⁸ Szondi P., *Theory of the Modern Drama* (Cambridge: 1987) 7–10.

²⁹ Ibidem.

Ses longs mugissements font tremble le rivage.
 Le ciel avec horreur voit ce monstre sauvage,
 La terre s'en émeut, l'air est infecté,
 Le flot qui l'apporta, recule épouvanté.³⁰

Those lines may work in poetry, but in tragedy, La Motte states, the spectator “est choqué de voir un homme accablé de douleur, si recherché dans ses termes, & si attentif à sa description.”³¹ In his *Réflexion sur Longin*, included in the 1710 edition of the *Traité du sublime* Boileau will defend Racine's verses by stating that when a character is emotionally overwhelmed it is not unlikely that he uses a poetic language to express his emotions and to communicate them to the audience. That the audience almost always applauds this scene in performances of *Phèdre*, only subscribes this for Boileau. But, as Romira Worvill rightly argues, this reaction of the audience proves exactly La Motte's point: “If the spectators applaud, then they are responding to the language as poetry and showing their appreciation for Racine's skill; they are not absorbed in the illusion of character and situation, which is exactly what La Motte had claimed.”³² La Motte is later followed by Fénélon, who in his *Lettre sur les occupations sur l'académie* (1714), criticizes Racine for his “description la plus pompeuse et la plus fleurie de la figure du dragon”.³³

Visuality in Theatre

La Motte will continue to reject the supremacy of language in classicist tragedy and will instead plead for the replacement of speech by action and visual effects. In his *Preface* to his prose version of Racine's tragedy *Mithridate* (1730), he writes that tragedy and theatre not only “demandent de l'appareil & du spectacle”, but that they even constitute “une beauté qui semble être de son essence”.³⁴

When La Motte pleads for a profound visualization of theatre, he is clearly inspired by the successes of the new genre of the *tragédie lyrique* or *tragédie en musique*: the French answer to Italian opera seria which came into being with Lully's and Quinault's *Cadmus et Hermione* in 1673

³⁰ http://abu.cnam.fr/cgi-bin/donner_html?phedrez

³¹ Houdar de La Motte Antoine, *Œuvres* (Paris, Prault l'ainé: 1753) I, 27.

³² Worvill, “Seeing Speech” 52.

³³ François de Fénélon, *Lettre* II, 1171.

³⁴ Houdar de La Motte, *Œuvres* 183–185.

and which was famous for its visual abundance. The *tragédie lyrique* is the genre par excellence in which machinery is used to confound and amaze the audience. A century after D'Aubignac, Louis de Cahusac, in the *Lettres sur la danse ancienne et moderne* (1754) clearly characterizes the *tragédie lyrique* within a visual language comparing it to a huge canvas:

(T)he tragedie en musique as conceived by Quinault is a grand plot which unfold over the course of five acts. It is a canvas on a huge scale, like those of Raphael and Michelangelo. (...) From the outset the gods, the early heroes, of whom legend gives us such poetic and elevated ideas, Olympus, the underworld, the kingdom of the sea, miraculous transformations, love, revenge, hatred, every passion personified, the elements in motion, the whole of nature brought to life; all furnished the writer and the composer with a thousand different tableaux, and an inexhaustible supply of material for the most dazzling spectacle.³⁵

When we look at engravings that cover some libretto's of the *tragédie lyrique* and which were often diverted from actual stage designs, we get an idea of what Cahusac meant with the dazzling spectacle of French opera. In the prologue of *Atys* (1676) (Fig. 1) by Lully-Quinault we see Chronos who, surrounded by twenty four singers representing the hours of day and night, descends from heaven.³⁶ The spectacular use of machinery is not only confined to prologues in the *tragédie lyrique* but is used throughout the entire genre. At the third act of *Thésée* (1675) (Fig. 2), we see Medea who defeats several monsters. It was especially for Lully's *Armide* (1686) (Fig. 3) for which the famous stagedesigner Jean Berain invented the most spectacular stage technology. Aerial departures for the main characters, Armide and her enchanted lover Renaud, the frightening appearance of monsters and allegorical figures such as Hate and especially the grandiose destruction of Armides palace at the close of the opera.³⁷

Le merveilleux as the poetical cornerstone of *tragédie lyrique*

As one can imagine, this visual abundance of the *tragédie lyrique* in combination with music may have overpowered many contemporaries.

³⁵ Cahusac Louis de, *La danse ancienne et moderne* (La Haye, Jean Neaulme: 1754) III, 108–111 quoted in: Wood. – Sadler, *French Baroque Opera* 45–47.

³⁶ Thomas D.E., *Aesthetics of Opera in the Ancien Régime 1647–1785* (Cambridge: 2002) 77–86.

³⁷ Thomas, *Aesthetics of Opera* 104.



Fig. 1. Perseus attacks the sea monster in *Persée*. Engraving from *Recueil des Opera, des Ballets & des plus belles Pieces en Musique* (Amsterdam, 1690) Vol. II.



Fig. 2. Phaeton brought down by Zeus in *Phaëton*. Engraving from *Recueil des Opera, des Ballets & des plus belles Pieces en Musique* (Amsterdam, 1690) Vol. II.



Fig. 3. The destruction of the palace of Armide in *Armide*. Engraving from *Recueil des Opera, des Ballets & des plus belles Pieces en Musique* (Amsterdam: 1690) Vol. III.

Many critics, however, were less fond of the genre. According to Louis de Cahusac an important reason for this often hostile reaction is to be found in the attempt of Quinault and Lully to provide the new genre with a pedigree. Cahusac writes:

Quinault made just one mistake (...) he called the new genre he had just created by the name 'tragedy'. As a result, Boileau, Racine and other French literary figures looked for the characteristics of the genre usually known as tragedy and evaluated [the *tragédie lyrique*] according to the greater or lesser extent to which it resembled the already established genre.³⁸

Doing so, the contrast between the *tragédie lyrique* and classicist tragedy could not be greater. With its mythological and fairy-tale stories, its sudden changes in places, times and actions, its appeal for the thematically and visual spectacular and with its singing and dancing,³⁹ the *tragédie lyrique* became the opposite of the grand and elaborate simplicity of Corneilian and Racinian tragedy.

This lack of grand and noble simplicity in style, and the fact that the required *enlèvement* and *ravissement* that produces a sublime effect was to be found in the visual and performative capacities of the new genre, gives us a reason why Boileau never paid any attention to the sublime possibilities of the genre. However, this does not mean that Boileau did not recognize the *tragédie lyrique* of being able to transport, to ravish or to abduct the beholder. Only, he did not consider those possibilities in the poetical terms of the sublime, but in moral terms. In Boileau's *Satire X* (1694), the seductive power of Lully's spectacles has become a gendered category that, especially for women, is dangerously irresistible. Boileau writes:

³⁸ Wood. – Sadler, *French Baroque Opera* 94.

³⁹ This can be read in Charles Rivière du Fresny's *Amusemens sérieux et comiques* from 1699, where he gives us a vivid and somewhat ironic description of the *tragédie lyrique* as a most enchanting experience: "As I have already told you, the Opéra is an enchanted place: the land of metamorphoses. We see such transformations happening there very suddenly: in the twinkling of an eye, men become demigods, and goddesses become human. There the traveller has no need to race from country to country: it is the countries which come to him. Without moving from one place, you travel from one end of the world to the other, and from the underworld to the Elysian Fields. (...) A word about the natural inhabitants of the land of opera: they are a motley crew. They neither speak without singing nor walk without dancing, and often do so on the slightest pretext." Rivière du Fresny Charles, *Amusemens sérieux et comiques* (Paris, Claude Barbin: 1699) 62–63, quoted in Wood. – Sadler, *French Baroque Opera* 4–25.

When you soon take her yourself to the Opéra,
 How do you think your saintly one will view
 The harmonious pomp of this seductive spectacle?
 She will witness those dances, those heroes with their sensual voices,
 Those dialogues centred solely on love,
 Those suave Renauds, those deranged Rolands;
 From them she will learn that it is never too soon to let oneself succumb,
 That heaven gave us hearts for the sole purpose of loving.
 And what of all those clichés of lewd morality
 Which Lully rekindled with the sounds of his music?
 By what emotional stirrings in her heart
 Will she feel her senses all aroused?⁴⁰

Despite the fact that women may be brought out of their senses by a *tragédie lyrique*, Boileau does not ascribe to the *tragédie lyrique* an effect of the sublime. For this authoritative spokesmen of *les Anciens*, the new genre of the *tragédie lyrique* could never be respectable, let alone be the subject of a discussion on the sublime.

For *les Modernes*, however, the genre and its success was taken as proof that contemporary France under the glorious reign of Louis XIV had outmoded the classics, an *aemulatio* we already discussed by De Fontenelle. Whereas *les Anciens* judged that the new genre of the *tragédie lyrique* was extravagant as it broke every rule of classicist theatre, *les Modernes* saw in the genre an opportunity to historicize the existing poetical system. Charles Perrault writes in the *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes* from 1697 that it is unreasonable to judge the *tragédie lyrique* according to the rule of Aristotle and Horace, since the *tragédie lyrique* did not exist among the Graeco-Roman dramatic genres. Moreover, Perrault also saw the extravagance of the genre as an opportunity to extend the poetical system. He writes “that the ingenious invention of opera is a significant addition to the beauty and greatness of the system of poetics”.⁴¹ In the extension of the poetical system, the extravagance of the *tragédie lyrique* was precisely motivated and appreciated by what Boileau has used as a synonym for the sublime, *le merveilleux*. Here, *le merveilleux* as used by D'Aubignac cannot be found. *Les Modernes* use the term as Boileau did in the context of literature and rhetoric and transpose it to the *tragédie lyrique*, since they use the term to name a totally overpowering feeling

⁴⁰ Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, “Satire X”, quoted in Wood – Sandal, *French Baroque Opera* 39

⁴¹ Perrault C., *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes en ce qui regarde les arts et les sciences* (Munich: 1964) 284.

without any rational distance. Therefore, we can look at Jean de La Bruyère who establishes a firm link between the new genre of the *tragédie lyrique* and *le merveilleux*. In *Caractères* from 1688 he writes:

C'est prendre le change, et cultiver un mauvais goût, que de dire, comme on l'a fait, que la machine n'est qu'un amusement d'enfants et qui ne convient qu'aux marionnettes; elle augmente et embellit la fiction, soutient dans les spectateurs cette douce illusion qui est tout le plaisir du théâtre, où elle jette encore le *merveilleux*. Il ne faut point de vols, ni de chars, ni de changements aux *Bérénices* et à *Pénélope*: il en faut aux *opéras*, et le propre de ce spectacle est de tenir les esprits, les yeux et les oreilles dans un égal enchantement.⁴²

From now on, *le merveilleux* will function as the distinctive characteristic of the *tragédie lyrique* to make clear that the mind has to be totally taken by the visual and auditive enchantment of the awe-inspiring performances.

In the above mentioned *Lettres sur la danse ancienne et moderne*, Louis de Cahusac similarly sees *le merveilleux* as the cornerstone of a true poetics for the *tragédie lyrique*, as a fundamental law without which the *tragédie lyrique* could not exist.⁴³ De Cahusac defends *le merveilleux* as nothing opposite to *vraisemblance*, but as something logically derived from the subject matter of the *tragédie lyrique*. From the late seventeenth century on up to Batteux' mid-eighteenth century *Les beaux arts réduit à un même principe* (1746), the spectacular visualisations of the *tragédie lyrique* are continuously motivated by the fact that Gods and mythological characters actually do fly on chariots through the air, that they do travel in one minute from one place to an other and from one time to an other time, and that their singing and dancing is appropriate because of their supernatural character. But this is not all. More than just defending *le merveilleux* as the logical outcome of the subjectmatter, Batteux also sees the spectacular characteristics of *tragédie lyrique* "as the divine element of epic transferred to the stage". Combined with the lyric language of opera, it expresses "ecstasy, euphoria and intoxication of feeling."⁴⁴

What is particularly interesting here is that *le merveilleux* La Bruyère and Batteux use in their defence of the *tragédie lyrique* has nothing to do anymore with d'Aubignac's use of the term as a double spectatorship in which the rational and distanced admiration for the spectacular always

⁴² Bruyère J. de La, *Les caractères* (Paris: 1998) §47.

⁴³ See Kintzler C., *Poétique de l'opéra français* (Paris: 1991) 222.

⁴⁴ Batteux Abbé de, *Les Beaux arts réduits à un même principe* (Genève: 1969) 292.

overrules naïve astonishment. On the contrary, La Bruyère and Batteux both stress the fact how *le merveilleux* produces on the audience an effect of ravishment that shudders rationality and can cause great emotional transport and penetration. If Longinus, and later Boileau, saw the effect of the sublime as the ability “not to persuade the audience, but rather to transport them out of themselves”, and thus entailing a moment of confusion we can see here how *le merveilleux* as the poetical cornerstone of *tragédie lyrique* is more and more argued in terms similar to the sublime. The sublime, like the theatrical *merveilleux*, points at a moment of confusion for the beholder, it “requires a disintegration on the part of the subject and always entails a loss of control”.⁴⁵ In his *Lettres à Madame la Marquise de Pompadour sur l’opéra* (1741) Gabriel Bonnot Mably writes that the *tragédie lyrique* “must rob me of the use of my mind and my senses, so as to occupy me solely with my passions. (...) I feel as though infused with the majesty of God.” In this process one is transported “in spite of ourselves (...) to the place depicted on the stage”. Mably concludes with the statement that he does “not know the reason for this, but the experience is enough.”⁴⁶ The same is to be noticed with Cahusac who stresses the enchanting, dazzling and astonishing character of the *tragédie lyrique* and appreciates the concept of *le merveilleux* for its affective capacities on eyes, ears and heart:

Le merveilleux brought together in the theatre poetry, painting, music, dance and technical skills with sufficient realism, and from the union of all these arts could come a ravishing whole, which took the spectators out of themselves and transported them to enchanted worlds in the course of a lively performance.⁴⁷

In this quote, we read how *le merveilleux* is considered as a purely theatrical term. It designates a theatre of excesses that pulls out all the stops to produce a maximum and almost ecstatic effect on the spectator. An ecstatic effect that recalls the sublime effect as described by Fénélon in his *Dialogues sur l’éloquence* where artist and artistry disappear into the work of art resulting in the total and momentarily absorption of the spectator.

⁴⁵ Thomas, *Aesthetics of Opera* 123.

⁴⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 124.

⁴⁷ Cahusac quoted in Wood – Sandal, *French Baroque Opera* 113.

Conclusion

Our so-called Burgundian lady of qualities took the deplorable state of monsters in French lyrical theatre as the object of a letter on the theatrical *merveilleux*. Her letter was most probably ironical, but she nonetheless also suggested that, if employed well and under certain circumstances, the monsters and other spectacular scenery in *tragedie lyrique* could 'stir up violent feelings in the spectator's heart'. Here she clearly echoes the way how La Bruyère, Batteux and Cahusac characterized *le merveilleux* and saw it as the poetical cornerstone of the genre. Although the abundance of *le merveilleux* may at first sight look as the complete opposite to the grand and simple severity of the sublime as Boileau conceived, defenders of the *tragédie lyrique* suggested that there are striking similarities between the theatrical *merveilleux* and the sublime. Both concepts produced a comparable effect of total astonishment and great emotional transport that leads the audience away from rational understanding. This is opposed to earlier theories on theatrical *merveilleux* where a double way of spectatorship was involved in which the initial surprise was followed with a rational admiration for the machinery.

It is remarkable that this particular shift in the appreciation of the theatrical *merveilleux* occurs at the same time of the publication of Boileau's translation of Longinus in 1674. That the term sublime was never confined in this period to the visual spectacular of the French operatic genre can be explained by the fact that during the first half of the eighteenth century the sublime in France remained, due to the enormous influence of Boileau, mainly a literary and rhetoric concept. A rhetoric concept however, that, if not in those words, was nonetheless of great importance for Fénélon and for La Motte to describe the effect of the visual arts on the beholder. When the sublime in the second half of the eighteenth century in France, thanks to the influence of Burke's interpretation of the term, is extended to the visual arts as well,⁴⁸ we see that *le merveilleux* and the sublime also begin to appear as synonymous in descriptions of French operatic practice. In the *Dictionnaire dramatique* (1776) Sébastien Chamfort and Joseph de La Porte write:

⁴⁸ See May G., "Diderot and Burke: A Study in Aesthetic Affinity", *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 75 (1960) 527–539.

[T]he poet who writes a *tragedie lyrique* has to make an impression on the senses rather than on the mind. He particularly wants to produce a 'spectacle enchanteur et *merveilleux*', rather than a piece where *vraisemblance* is exactly observed. (...) The poet tends to look for vast and sublime subject matters. The musician joins him in making them even more sublime. Both unite the efforts of their art and their geniuses to abduct and enchant the astonished spectator and transport him to the bewitched palace of *Armide*, to the Olympus, to hell or to the famous shadows of the Elysian Fields.

Although the sublime is here confined to poetry and music, it no longer contradicts with the spectacular side of the genre. The theatrical *merveilleux* can be seen here as the 'performance' of the sublime qualities of poetry and music. In transporting the spectator to the palace of *Armide*, to heaven or to hell, the boundaries between representation and reality are blurred. By doing so, it creates a moment of confusion and marks a modification in the spectator's identity. For a short moment, he has surpassed his own subjectivity, which, in the end, is probably the most important characteristic of the sublime. The spectacularity of *tragédie lyrique*, as its defenders claimed, was far from an obstacle to attain the sublime. On the contrary, one can say that in stressing the visibility of the theatrical performance, they corrected the literary perspective of Boileau and brought back the appeal of the intensely visual character of the Longinian sublime.

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THE DEMOSTHENES OF PAINTING.
SALVATOR ROSA AND THE 17TH CENTURY SUBLIME

Helen Langdon

Salvator Rosa, the depicter of 'Wild and Savage Nature', the exponent of a 'Great and Noble' style, has long been celebrated as the precursor of 18th century concepts of the Sublime.¹ Horace Walpole famously described a journey across the Alps in 1739 as 'Precipices, mountains, torrents, wolves, rumblings – Salvator Rosa', and the startling subjects of his paintings of prodigies and enchantment had, by the 1770s, become traditionally sublime. He was celebrated as a freedom fighter, and in his *Self Portrait as Warrior* (Siena, Monte dei Paschi di Siena),² hand on sword, he challenges the viewer with melancholy intensity; he seems the archetype of the sublime and original genius, whose bold and rapid brush could 'snatch a grace beyond the reach of art'.³ The aim of this essay is to put Rosa back into his own times, and to rethink his relationship with contemporary aesthetics and concerns.

The Sources of the 17th century Sublime

The major source for 17th century concepts of the sublime in Italy was the anonymous treatise on rhetoric, *On the Sublime*, probably written in the mid first century AD;⁴ it was long thought to be by Longinus, and I shall here use this traditional name. For Longinus the sublime was characterised by its power to amaze, and to transport. It overwhelmed with

¹ Richardson Jonathan, Senior and Junior, *An Account of some of the Statues, Bas-reliefs, Drawings, and Pictures in Italy* (London, J. Knapton: 1722) 187. For this, and for a summary of the English response to Rosa, see Monk S.H., *The Sublime; A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* (Michigan: 1960) 193–196.

² Cassani, S. (ed.), *Salvator Rosa; tra mito e magia*, exhib. catal. (Naples: 2008) 103. The attribution of this portrait is uncertain. It is possible that it is an 18th century painting, and that the artist, who clearly knew the Rosa *Self portrait* (Detroit, Detroit Institute of Arts) has already represented the Rosa of myth and Romantic legend.

³ Pope Alexander, *An Essay on Criticism* (London, W. Lewis: 1711) 1.152.

⁴ I have throughout used the translation by P. Murray and T.S. Dorsch, in Murray P. (ed.), *Classical Literary Criticism* (London: 1965; repr. 2004).

the expression of violent emotion; it was associated with fear and danger. Longinus praises those writers who can create terror, and, through metaphor, he associates his literary heroes with the elemental violence of nature; his instances of sublimity involve storms, the openness of the sea, and the heights of the heavens. Longinus says little of external nature in its own right, but in a famous passage he does suggest that whatever is divine in man longs for the infinite. By some instinct implanted in our souls we admire, not small streams, but 'the Nile, the Danube, the Rhine, and even more than these the Ocean', not the household fire, but those of the heavens, shrouded in darkness, and the craters of Etna, 'whose eruptions throw up from their depths rocks and even whole mountains, and at times pour out rivers of that earth-born, spontaneous fire'.⁵ In this passage he established a catalogue of wonders which proved long lasting in the sublime tradition.

The baroque passion for *novità* and the *prodigioso* stimulated an interest in an aesthetic of the sublime. Longinus' treatise was well known in 17th century Italy, particularly in those circles in which Rosa moved, amongst the scholars associated with the Barberini court, and at the Accademia degli Umoristi.⁶ For those poets associated with Giovan Battista Marino, it suggested the power to enchant and to astonish with something rare and exceptional, never before seen, whose skill itself created *meraviglia*, a state of rapt admiration. It had, too, a mystic power, and the Jesuits seized on aspects of the sublime to suggest a desire to transcend the boundaries of the sensible world.⁷ And for some natural scientists and philosophers the Longinian sublime blended with the 'aesthetics of the infinite', with that sense of the vastness and mutability of the natural world revealed by the new science of the early modern era. This science exalted intellectual and physical daring, and created, before a universe so newly rich in wonders, a sense of '*stupore*' and '*ebbrezza*'. Nature became a theatre of marvels, its power unleashed and irrational, its relationship with man

⁵ Longinus in Murray, *Classical Literary Criticism* 155.

⁶ On the history of Longinus' treatise in Italy see Weinberg B., *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: 1974) 2 vols., I 188–90, 197, 237, II 785, 805–806 and Weinberg B., "Translations and Commentaries on Longinus to 1600", *Modern Philology* 47, 3 (1950) 147. For the interest of the Umoristi in Longinus see Costa G., "Appunti sulla fortuna del Pseudo-Longino: Alessandro Tassoni e Paganino Gaudenzio", *Studi Seicenteschi* 25 (1984) 123–143.

⁷ For these 17th century models of the sublime see Fumaroli M., *L'Ecole du Silence. Le sentiment des images au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: 1994) 96–97.

uncertain.⁸ The response of 17th century writers was often underpinned by the nature poetry of the late Stoics, who were 'dazzled into melancholia' by the grandeur of the universe and of Lucretius, who, in *De Rerum Naturae*, wrote of cosmic marvels, of the terror of the abyss, and of a world collapsing in ruin.⁹

In the following essay I shall tease out the various strands of thought and feeling which, particularly in the 1660s, stimulated Rosa's interests in models of the sublime.

The Natural Sublime; the 17th century Literary Background

Rosa was trained in Naples, where he painted fresh and spontaneous views of the Neapolitan coast. In Rome in the late 1630s, and for ten years in Florence, most of them as court painter to the Medici he painted lyrical landscapes indebted to Claude Lorrain and to Dutch and Flemish landscape painters in Rome. His Tuscan landscapes are rooted in an aesthetic of contrast and variety. They set the *locus amoenus*, or lovely place of classical poetry, with its shady trees and purling brook, against a wild and rocky landscape, as late antique poets had also done.¹⁰ They have those contrasts of mountain and sea, of steep climbs and the level plains of the shore, of which the poet Gabriele Chiabrera wrote with delight, for 'Variety is the source, both of amusements and of human pleasures'.¹¹ Giulio Mancini, in his *Considerazioni sulla pittura* (1619–21) had written that the most achieved kind of landscape was the *paese composto* or *perfetto*, reassuring and pleasurable, where the eye takes in the pleasures offered by each plane, to

⁸ For the importance of the new science in the development of the sublime see Nicolson M.H., *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Seattle – London: 1959; repr. 1997). Nicolson 143 described how an 'aesthetics of the infinite' developed entirely independent of the treatise of Longinus in response to the 'fullness, vastness of a universe man might not intellectually comprehend, which yet satisfied his unquiet soul, fed his insatiability'. See also Tuveson E., "Space, Deity, and the Natural Sublime", *Modern Language Quarterly* 12 (1951) 20–38.

⁹ Fitter C., *Poetry, space, landscape. Toward a new theory* (Cambridge: 1995) 125. Fitter has described the 'vertical imagination of Marcus Aurelius and Seneca, the sense of man as 'lost in space', punily sublunar beneath the silent immensities'.

¹⁰ The best description of the *locus amoenus* remains that in Curtius E.R., *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, transl. Trask W.R. (London: 1948; repr. London: 1979) 185–186.

¹¹ Chiabrera Gabriello, *Delle Opere di Gabriello Chiabrera* (Venice, Angiolo Geremia: 1757) 95: 'Il variare è fonte e de'trastulli e degli uman piacer'.

finish with the repose of the horizon.¹² The poet Antonio Abati appreciated Rosa's landscapes in this way, and describes, in terms strikingly similar to those of Mancini, the delight the details in Rosa's landscapes gave to the wandering eye, which moved over the surface 'and wandered there for wide distances, but did not grow tired, because there were objects which refreshed it, and did not halt its path, because there were infinite beauties'. He loved the variety of scenes, of animals and men, of hills and sea, amongst them the 'promontory, which in the mirror of the low waves doubled the image of its gigantic awesomeness'.¹³

Rosa's Florentine landscapes remain within this classical tradition, and when he uses dramatic motifs they are there for contrast, to surprise or to create the thrill of fear of a wild landscape. But in the 1650s and 1660s he created a new ideal, of majesty and grandeur, and by this date new literary models had come into play. Foremost are the writings of the Jesuit historian and scientist Daniello Bartoli, whom Rosa admired. His landscape descriptions, perhaps the most theatrical of the 17th century, are intensely visual, and may have been themselves inspired by painting. Underpinned by many echoes of Seneca, they bring together different models of the natural sublime, and offer that sense of the wonder of external nature which has a conceptual affinity with the landscape of Rosa. Bartoli was immersed in the astronomical and geographical discoveries of early modern science, but for him God was the creator and architect of a universe which reflected his glory. His language is often Longinian, and he yearns for the divine; he responds to an 'aesthetics of the infinite', to the awesome otherness of the vastly expanded universe. In the pre-Copernican world the earth had been imperfect, and mountains the blemishes of sin, but Bartoli gave an aesthetic value to the wild, the irregular, and the tormented in a way that breaks with the Renaissance sense of a harmony of forms. He wrote with passion of majestic and splintered tree trunks, of waterfalls and torrents, of craggy rocks and mountains, of the limitless vaults of the sky. He stresses that union of fear and pleasure, of horror and delight, which had already been a motif in ancient poetry. But he moves beyond this, to suggest a commotion of the soul before the vastness of

¹² Mancini G., *Considerazioni sulla pittura* (Rome: 1956) 114.

¹³ Abati A., "Al Signor Diego Gera: Antonio Abati intorno a Salvator Rosa Pittore e Poeta", in Cesareo G.A. (ed.), *Poesie e Lettere di Salvator Rosa* (Naples: 1892) II 150, 152: e vi peregrina le miglia, ma non vi prova stanchezze, perché ha oggetti, che lo ricreano, non vi termina il camino, perché ha bellezze infinite; 'Promontorio, che nel chiaro specchio dell'onde basse raddoppia l'imagini delle sue gigantee horridezze'.

nature. A remarkable description of a 'forest in the air' evokes intimations of infinity. He exclaims in wonder at

Those great trunks of wild and vigorous trees, and their vast branches, every one of which is itself an entire and large tree, all together they make a forest in the air springing from one trunk; and of these same trunks, those that are most ancient, hollowed out and cavernous; and those shadows over shadows of trees over trees and finally that eternal silence, that holy wilderness, that majestic horror. . . .¹⁴

The image of the forest in the air recurs, and he describes the spreading branches of an aged oak, where 'you would have wondered at the beauty in that wildness, and in that neglect so refined an art', an effect in which chance has surpassed art.¹⁵ Elsewhere he suggest a thrill of terror experienced during a storm in the Roman countryside:

Has it ever happened to you, as it did to me, to find yourself journeying through a dark night on some bare mountain peak, and, a flash of lightning suddenly flaring forth from the clouds, there opened before your eyes a scene of the most varied and changing forms. Other mountains, other alps, other valleys and fields and woods and torrents and rivers; but all shown in a flash, and in a flash withdrawn and vanished; in effect having seen them seemed nothing more than to have seemed to see them.¹⁶

For Bartoli man is a spectator in a theatre of new and noble *meraviglie*,¹⁷ and his language echoes Longinus who speaks of man as a spectator in the great festival of the universe.¹⁸ At the Umoreisti the poet Alessandro Tassoni had commented on Longinus' catalogue of wonders, adding to the break with the dominant 17th century tradition of idyllic landscape.¹⁹

¹⁴ Bartoli D., *De' Simboli trasportati al morale* (Venice: 1830) 348–349: 'Que' gran corpi d'alberi selvaggi e robusti, e que' loro gran rami che sono ciascun da se un intero e grande albero, e tutti insieme fanno una selva in aria, piantata sopra un medesimo tronco; e di quegli stessi tronchi i più vecchissimi, smidollati e cavernosi: e quelle ombre sopra ombre d'alberi sopra alberi . . . e finalmente, quell'eterno silenzio, quella sacra solitudine, quel maestoso orrore . . .'

¹⁵ Bartoli D., *La Ricreazione del Savio in discorso con la natura e con Dio*, ed. B.M. Garavelli (Parma: 1992) 125: 'avrete ammirato in quell'orrido una bellezza, in quel neglecto un'arte sì ben intesa'. I am grateful to Floriana Conte for this reference, and for other advice over Bartoli; her book on Bartoli is forthcoming.

¹⁶ Raimondi E., 'Daniello Bartoli e la Ricreazione del Savio', in Raimondi E., *Letteratura Barocca. Studi sul Seicento Italiano* (Florence: 1961) 256: 'Evvi mai avvenuto quello che a me, di trovarvi di notte buia in viaggio su qualche ignuda cima di monte, e scoccando poi improvviso dalle nuvole un lampo, aprirvisi davanti agli occhi una scena di varissime apparenze? Altri monti, altre alpi, e valli e campagne e selve e torrenti e fiumi: ma ogni cosa d'un baleno al mostrarvisi e d'un baleno al ritrarvisi e disparire: sì fattamente che il pure aver veduto vi riesce quasi un niente più che parervi d'aver veduto'.

¹⁷ Bartoli Daniello, *Uomo di Lettere* (Rome, Francesco Corbelletti: 1645) 27.

¹⁸ Longinus in Murray, *Classical Literary Criticism* 155.

¹⁹ Costa, "Appunti sulla fortuna del Pseudo-Longino" 125.

Another Jesuit scientist, Athanasius Kircher, shared Bartoli's sense of the natural world as a wonderful work of divine wisdom, but he also took part in the 17th century's growing interest in an underground world, 'as strange, as romantic, as the new world in the moon'.²⁰ His sumptuously illustrated *Mundus Subterraneus* (1665) records his passionate interest in the caves and underground rivers and fires of the internal earth. Kircher was an intrepid traveller, who journeyed in the seismic zones of southern Italy and Sicily, and tells how daringly he climbed into the smoking craters of Etna; he writes of the fiery fields around Naples, that you might imagine yourself in Hell, where all is savage and fearful.²¹ The illustrations added to the book's charm and fascination; Etna cracks apart, sublimely hurling forth huge rocks; rivers flow from underground caves, rushing to the sea where whirlpools rage; vast water reservoirs are revealed beneath the earth's mountain ranges. The book, so lively and so rich, was immensely influential. It lay between the new science, with its belief in experiment and first hand observation, and an older culture of magic and wonder, and this perhaps made its images immediately striking.

The Natural Sublime; Roman Landscape in the 1650s and 1660s

In 1649 Rosa moved to Rome, where Gaspard Dughet had recently completed his landscape frescoes in San Martino ai Monte, with their immense plains and open skies. In a remarkable series of landscapes Nicolas Poussin was exploring the concept of the sublime, and themes of death and terror, and at the same time editing Leonardo da Vinci's notebooks, and pondering Leonardo's descriptions of how to paint a storm. Rosa was a member of the *Accademia degli Umoresti*, and in this new intellectual context began to explore the concept of sublimity in landscape.

The tempest, as Louis Marin has written, is 'one of the elementary figures of the sublime' and it was this that interested Poussin.²² In the *Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe*, (1651: Frankfurt am Main, Städel Museum) Poussin had vied with Apelles in his ambition to paint the unrepresentable, for Apelles, Pliny tells us, knew how to paint the unrepresentable, thunder, and flashes of lightning.²³ Here the dazzling lightning is 'the irrepresent-

²⁰ Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom* 167.

²¹ Kircher Athanasius, *Mundus Subterraneus* (Amsterdam, Joannem Janssonium & Elizeum Weyerstraten: 1668) I, 187: I, 178.

²² Marin L., *Sublime Poussin*, transl. C. Porter (Stanford, Calif.: 1999) 121.

²³ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* (Cambridge, Mass. – London: 1969–1989) 9.35.96.

able of the sublime of the tempest'²⁴ and the hallucinatory quality of the painting recalls Bartoli's description of the storm in the Campagna. In the later 1650s Poussin became less interested in the effects of the storm, and more in the power of the elements, of air, earth and water, which have shaped the landscape, and which fill it with a sense of imminent terror. His *Landscape with Polyphemus* (1649; St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum) and the later *Landscape with Hercules and Cacus* (c.1660; Moscow, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts) are resonant with latent violence, of Etna brooding over an idyllic countryside, and of Hercules in a landscape whose stormy light and massive cliffs seem still to reflect the terror of his grisly fight with Cacus. These are landscapes without man, without the buildings of civilisation, and where nature seems to return to its primordial elements. They have been described as allegorical storms,²⁵ where the shock of the sublime lies in the sense of hidden danger, and they work on the imagination to create *terribilità*.²⁶ These works were a catalyst to Rosa. He responded to the subtlety and tension of Poussin's allegorical storms, and in a group of mythological paintings of the late 1650s and early 1660s, perhaps most perfectly in the *Landscape with Mercury and Argus*, [Fig. 1] (Kansas City, William Rockhill Nelson gallery of Art) he creates a similar vast scenery, of rivers and huge mountains peaks, where the forces of nature, the winds that have twisted the trees, the storm clouds gathering, seem only temporarily in abeyance, lulled, like Argus, by Mercury's music. Io, transformed into a cow, suffers alone in an inhospitable nature, the haunt of wild beasts, her food the leaves of trees and bitter tasting grass, her anguish echoed in the jagged spikes of dead tree trunks that frame her. It is the sense of a landscape alien to man, full of danger and menace, that Rosa shares with Poussin, and that make these landscapes sublime.²⁷

²⁴ Marin, *Sublime Poussin* 139.

²⁵ McTighe S., *Nicolas Poussin's Landscape Allegories* (Cambridge: 1996) 31–52.

²⁶ For this view of Poussin's landscapes I am indebted to Clélia Nau; see Nau C., *Le Temps du Sublime. Longin et le Paysage Poussinien* (Rennes: 2005) 238. Nau poses the question 'Que reste-t-il cependant de la véhémence sublime, ou tragique, du choc dans une tempête allégorique sans orage, dans une histoire de corps-à-corps sans combat?' She concludes that, in the representation of menace or danger past, 'terribilité' is constructed rather than grasped at first glimpse. The paintings work on the imagination, and it is this that adds a sense of danger and mystery.

²⁷ For this painting see Salerno L., *L'Opera Completa di Salvator Rosa* (Milan: 1975) 96 cat. no. 145. The painting, in the collection of Agostino Chigi, was paired with Claude's *Landscape with David at the cave of Adullam* (London, National Gallery) which dates from 1658.



Fig. 1. Salvator Rosa (Italian; born Arenella (Naples) 1615 – Rome 1673), *Argus and Io*, 1660. Oil on canvas, 112.1 × 141.9 cm. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 32–192/1. Photograph Jamison Miller.

In the later 1650s and 1660s Rosa created ever more theatrical works. In 1662 he travelled in the Appenines, and his letter written on this journey makes clear that he was in search of extravagant motifs. He loved the dramatic contrasts between the wild and the cultivated, the flat and the rugged, and the ‘*orrida bellezza*’ of the falls at Terni.²⁸ With the *Landscape with the Dishonest Woodman* (London, National Gallery),²⁹ and the *Landscape with the Finding of Moses* [Fig. 2] (Detroit, The Detroit Institute of Arts)³⁰ he moved away from the tensions of Poussin’s allegorical storms towards a more theatrical grandeur, drawing closer to the Duguet of such vast and flamboyant works as the *Landscape with Moses and*

²⁸ Rosa S., *Lettere 1641–1673*, eds. L. Festa and G.G. Borrelli (Naples: 2003) 287–288.

²⁹ Salerno, *L’Opera Completa di Salvator Rosa* 96 cat. no. 145.

³⁰ Salerno, *L’Opera Completa di Salvator Rosa* 94. For these two paintings see also Ward Bissell R., in Ward Bissell R. – Derstine A. – Miller D. (eds.), *Masters of Italian Baroque Painting. The Detroit Institute of Arts* (London: 2005) 174–177.



Fig. 2. Salvator Rosa, *The Finding of Moses*, c.1663. Oil on canvas, 123 × 202 cm. Founders Society Purchase with funds from Mr and Mrs Edgar B. Whitcomb. Photograph 1994 The Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan, USA.

the Angel (London, National Gallery). In his later *Landscape with Jacob's Dream* (Chatsworth, coll. Devonshire)³¹ the forms are brought close to the surface, in an all over patterning of clouds and rocks; its turbulent unreality suggests the terror of the Biblical vision. In this series of paintings all that thrilled in a 17th century sense of the grandeur of the universe, that sense of the world as a theatre of marvels, and of the untrammelled power of the elements, which is so vivid in the writings of Bartoli and Kircher, was made visible. Rosa painted great tree trunks, splintered by lightening, and covered in moss; the hills whose heads touch heaven; cavernous rock arches and torrents, so reminiscent of Kircher's *Mundus Subterraneus*, and mysterious depths of great forests. They are rooted in a baroque sense of cosmic wonderment, and sublime in their evocation of infinity, and of primordial natural forces. With *Jacob's Dream* the sublime is close to ecstasy, and it suggests that divine longing for what lies beyond the sensible world, for going beyond the boundaries by which we are circumscribed.

³¹ Salerno, *L'Opera Completa di Salvator Rosa* 97. Salerno dates the painting to the late 1650s; I would put it later, perhaps even to the late 1660s.

The Sublime; Magic, Terror and Prophecy

In the 1660s Rosa added to his paintings of the grand spectacle of nature a series of subjects which explore her secrets and her most prodigious and marvellous creations. In desolate and stormy landscapes, entirely without man, Tobias finds a magical fish, and augurers watch the flight of birds. He no longer paints the iron willed heroes of antiquity, such as Atilius Regulus or Diogenes, but natural magicians, the dreaming Aeneas, conjuring up a vision of the god of the Tiber, (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art) or Jason dripping Medea's poison onto the head of a fearsome dragon (Montreal, Museum of Fine Arts).

These late paintings are full of the atmosphere of popular science then prevalent in Rome. Around the circles of Queen Christina of Sweden, of Kircher and his follower Gaspar Schott, which Rosa frequented, there was a lively interest in the ancient art of natural magic, that 'fascinating but frightening pursuit', which explored the hidden sympathies and antipathies of all things in the universe. It was complemented by artificial magic, the creation of devices which rivalled the creative powers of nature herself.³² This popular science was most brilliantly displayed in the museum which Kircher created in the centre of Rome, much visited by cardinals, princes and eminent visitors to Rome. In the entrance hung Kircher's prized armadillo, which was to inspire the fabulous creature in Bernini's *Fountain of the Four Rivers*, (Rome, Piazza Navona) and the gallery, with its soaring obelisks, and representation of the planets, seems, as Paula Findlen has written, an extension of the cosmos, a microcosm directly linked to the macrocosm.³³ Here Kircher dazzled all Rome with the displays of his *camera oscura* and magic lantern; he showed prodigious things conjured up by light and shade, damned souls burning in the flames of purgatory, death with his scythe, and the smoking flames of Etna.³⁴ In the pages of the *Mundus Subterraneus*, so much of which depends on precise first hand observation, this fascination with magic nonetheless remains evident. He populated his rocky caves with monsters and dragons, so that modern science and medieval bestiary seem to go hand in hand. Kircher

³² Grafton A., *Magic and Technology in Early Modern Europe*, Dibner Library Lecture 2002 (Washington: 2005) 11.

³³ Findlen P., "Un incontro con Kircher a Roma", in Lo Sardo E. (ed.), *Athanasius Kircher: Il Museo del Mondo*, exhib. catal. (Rome: 2001) 41.

³⁴ Kircher Athanasius, *Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae* (Amsterdam, Joannem Janssonium and Elizeum Weyerstraten: 1661) 768–769.

firmly believed in dragons.³⁵ He described a dragon in the collection of Cardinal Francesco Barberini, and he relished curious anecdotes about dragons both modern and medieval. In 1660, he recounts, a Roman knight, to the astonishment of all, was killed by a dragon in the Campagna, and its head displayed in Kircher's museum; he lingers on the story of a medieval knight of Rhodes, who daringly attacked a dragon lurking in vast underground cavern, from which there issued smoke and terrible cries, a monster with four feet with claws like a bear, mule's ears, glittering eyes, encased in hard scales, and its wings sky blue above, and blood coloured and yellow beneath.³⁶ This magical world view was propagated by Kircher's collaborator, Gaspar Schott, who in his *Magia Universalis*, had written of demons and spectres, of marvels of animals and men, of 'whatever in the universal nature of things is occult, paradoxical, prodigious and like to a miracle';³⁷ Paganino Gaudenzio too, an admirer of Rosa, wrote an essay on the significance of prodigies, where, in an antiquarian spirit, he discusses earthquakes, the eruption of Etna, whether Manes go forth from their sepulchres, spectres and monsters.³⁸

Whoever wants more dragons, writes Kircher, let him read Pliny and Pausanias, and with Rosa's Ovidian paintings of the 1660s the pages of Kircher's *Mundus Subterraneus* are re-imagined as classical myth. To Rosa the world of Ovid was dark and perilous. His sources lie, not in gallery paintings, but in the traditions established by graphic artists in illustrated editions of Ovid. He knew Bernard Salomon's edition of 1557,³⁹ and the illustrations of Antonio Tempesta. He responded, too, to the poetry of Johann Willem Baur, whose many etchings of Ovidian scenes from the late 1630s, create an intensely dramatic atmosphere, of spells and monsters, storms and fires, and rocky coastlines with gloomy caverns. In c.1663–4 Rosa made an etching of *Jason and the Dragon*,⁴⁰ and, probably around the same date, he painted *Cadmus killing the Dragon* (private collection). There followed, in the late 1660s, a painting of *Jason and the Dragon* [Fig. 3]

³⁵ Kircher, *Mundus Subterraneus* II, 89.

³⁶ Kircher, *Mundus Subterraneus* II, 90–92.

³⁷ Schott G., *Magia Universalis*, from the unnumbered pages of the *Proemium*, as given in Thorndike L., *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York: 1958) VII, 591.

³⁸ Gaudenzio Paganino, *De Prodigiorum Significatione* (Florence, Massa, Amatore & c.: 1638). This book is discussed in Thorndike, *A History of Magic* VIII, 478.

³⁹ Ovid, *La Métamorphose d'Ovide figurée* (Lyons, s.n.: 1557), with woodcuts by Bernard Salomon.

⁴⁰ Wallace R.W., *The Etchings of Salvator Rosa* (Princeton, New Jersey: 1979) 314.



Fig. 3. Salvator Rosa, *Jason charming the Dragon*, Oil on canvas, 78 × 66.5 cm. The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Purchase, Miss Oliver Hosmer Fund. Photo The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Christine Guest.

(Montreal, Museum of Fine Arts).⁴¹ With these works Rosa introduced a quality of terror, and a psychologically disturbing intensity of expression into his art. In the early 1660s he had created frieze like compositions, which suggest a rivalry with Poussin. But these later works are built up on powerful diagonals, with tightly grouped figures which convey an explosive force. Cadmus stands poised to kill the dragon, and entwined in the

⁴¹ Salerno, *L'Opera Completa di Salvator Rosa* 102 cat. no. 218.

vast coils of the monster's tail an anguished victim cries out, an image that resonates with a memory of the terrifying power of the Laokoon.⁴² His dragon, in the *Jason and the Dragon*, is brought close to the spectator; it attains, like Bernini's armadillo, an extravagant and wondrous quality, and perhaps it too is indebted, even in colour, to the fabulous creatures [Fig. 4] that fill the pages of Kircher's illustrated books.

These Ovidian paintings introduce into Rosa's art the '*bellezza dell'orrido*', and this quality culminates in the grandeur of his *Saul and the Witch of Endor* (1668; Paris, Louvre).⁴³ Rosa here returns to the macabre imagery of his witchcraft scenes painted in the 1640s and the 1650s. But where they are rooted in a literary tradition of the bizarre, and their aim is to startle and delight with ever stranger subject matter, the *Saul and the Witch of Endor* is more profoundly disturbing. The story itself is deeply ambivalent. Saul, fearful about his coming battle with the Philistines, asks the witch of Endor to conjure up the spirit of Samuel, to aid him in this perilous time. She does so, and, herself terrified, cries to Saul 'I saw gods ascending out of the earth. An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle'. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself' (1 Samuel 28; 11–14). Debates raged about the meaning of this Biblical story, about whether a witch could really conjure up a prophet, or whether the ghost of Samuel was in fact a devil. For Paganino Gaudenzio the story confirmed the immortality of the soul, and he discussed too Plato's and Pythagoras' views on the subject.⁴⁴ Rosa's witch is undoubtedly evil. No gods ascend from the earth, but a macabre crowd of skeletons, death on a skeletal horse, a gigantic owl, bird of ill omen. Samuel himself, in his white mantle, is startlingly classical, but all around him shifts and dissolves into flickering light and shade, reminiscent of the magic lantern displays in Kircher's museum. The painting is intended to terrify; it is about the darkness of human fantasy, 'horrible imaginings', and Rosa's Samuel stands with the other great ghosts of the 17th century, Hamlet's father, or the ghost of Banquo, or the vision of eight kings who pass across the stage before a desperate Macbeth.

Saul is a tragic hero, a once mighty king, rejected by God for his mercy and pity to his enemy, and this tragic grandeur links him to Catiline, the subject of Rosa's *The Conspiracy of Catiline* [Fig. 5] painted in 1663.⁴⁵ The story of Catiline, arch villain and rebel, who had plotted to overthrow

⁴² For an illustration and literature see *Salvator Rosa, tra mito e magia* 156.

⁴³ Salerno, *L'Opera completa di Salvator Rosa* 101 cat. no. 210.

⁴⁴ Gaudenzio Paganino, *Della Disunita Accademia* (Pisa, Francesco Tannagli: 1644) 27.

⁴⁵ See *Salvator Rosa tra mito e magia* 146 cat. no. 28.



Fig. 4. Dragon and Tiger Mountain, a wonder said to exist in the Orient. Illustration to Athanasius Kircher, *China Monumenta Illustrata*, (Amsterdam, 1667) 171. British Library Board 1501/314.



Fig. 5. Nicolò Cassana, *The Conspiracy of Catiline*, copy of the original by Salvator Rosa in the Martelli coll. Florence. Oil on canvas, 155 × 187 cm. Florence, Palazzo Pitti. Florence, Soprintendenza per I beni artistici.

the Roman republic in 63 BC, was widely read and imitated in the mid 17th century. He was an ambivalent figure, brave, eloquent and energetic, but, Sallust tells us, with ‘an evil and depraved nature’, whose ‘disordered mind ever craved the monstrous, incredible, gigantic’.⁴⁶ The dramatic contrasts of Catiline’s nature fascinated, and to these Sallust added a lurid description of his guilt-ridden appearance. Rosa’s painting shows the moment when Catiline, after an inflammatory speech exhorting his followers to rebel, compelled these conspirators to take an oath, and to seal it by drinking from bowls of human blood mixed with wine. Blood drips from a conspirator’s arm, and Catiline, about to drink, clasps his hand above the ancient altar at the painting’s center. The space is tight and compressed, emphasising the darkness and secrecy of the oath, with all its connotations of sorcery and magic, and of a dreadful deed outside human

⁴⁶ Sallust, *De Catilinae coniuratione*, trad. J.C. Rolfe (London-Cambridge: 1921) V.2–5.

society. In a sense it is the most theatrical of Rosa's paintings; the figures are brought close to the frontal plane, and we view them as though through a window, stressing the tightness of the space. The painting would have appealed to a 17th century viewer's desire for *meraviglia*, and for the bloodthirsty horrors of Senecan tragedy, so powerful a force in contemporary theatre. Seneca's monstrous heroes are lifted above common humanity by the extremity of their evil, and the 17th dramatist, Carlo de Dottori's, tragic hero, Aristodemo, is in the same tradition. With Rosa's Catiline this dark theatricality, this inward turned sense of haunting and disturbing evil, brings into painting the inverse sublimity of crime. It conveys that danger and violent emotion which Longinus throughout his treatise associates with the sublime. And one of Longinus' most dramatic illustrations is of just such a blood stained oath; he writes of Aeschylus' description of an oath in *Seven Against Thebes*, where seven warrior captains brush their hands with bullock's blood, and swear an oath 'by War and Havoc and Terror, the lover of blood. . .'.⁴⁷ Emanuele Tesauro, a writer who Rosa admired, likened the oath of Catiline to a thunderbolt, again drawing on a metaphor common in the rhetoric of the sublime.⁴⁸

Rosa's paintings of the 1660s are rooted in a contemporary interest in magic and prophecy, in horror and the macabre. They stress the world of dreams and of the fevered imagination, and may be associated with a growing re-evaluation of the irrational and the fantastic, of an art that transcends the rules.

Genius and the Sublime

The leaping off point for this new art, the art of the sublime, is genius, that passionate burning of divine inspiration of which Plato had written.⁴⁹ Longinus, who often echoes Plato, stresses that genius is an innate quality, and 'sublimity carries one up to where one is close to the majestic mind of God'.⁵⁰ The highest genius is far from being flawless, for it embraces danger, and aims at the heights. In the 16th and early 17th centuries Longinus opened one path to move away from an excessive cultivation

⁴⁷ Longinus in Murray, *Classical Literary Criticism* 134.

⁴⁸ Tesauro E., *Il Cannocchiale Aristotelico*, ed. G. Menardi (Turin: 1970) 75.

⁴⁹ I am indebted in this section to Murray P., "Poetic Genius and its Classical Origins", in Murray P. (ed.), *Genius: The History of an Idea* (Oxford: 1989) 9–31.

⁵⁰ Longinus in Murray, *Classical Literary Criticism* 156.

of the rules to a revaluation of the irrational, and to an art which, 'the echo of a noble mind',⁵¹ surpasses all rules. Francesco Patrizi, who several times refers directly to Longinus, in his *Della Poetica* (1586) wrote of the poet as the instrument and receptacle of enthousiasm, and of the effect of wonder or ecstasy in the audience. In 1635 Leone Allacci, librarian to the Barberini, published his *De erroribus magnorum virorum in dicendo*, a commentary on Longinus, which transposes long passages of Longinus' text. Allacci takes from Longinus the idea of the grandeur of man's soul; he believes, too, that it is this grandeur of soul that resonates in the sublime, and towards which the godlike genius strives, even through danger, and despite breaking all rules.⁵² In Bartoli's writings themes of enthousiasm and creative fury recur; he wrote of the frenzy of the mind, which transports the writer, and of the need not to prescribe limits to the free flight of invention. Nonetheless, as did Longinus himself, he believed that freedom should be balanced by judgement. For him the rhetorical sublime was a torrent, but most limpid, and a thunderbolt, but controlled.⁵³

Rosa was himself well aware of the concept of Platonic furor, and in his letters uses the language of inspiration and enthusiasm. He wrote to Don Antonio Ruffo that he 'must allow myself to be carried away by the transports of enthusiasm and use my brushes only when I feel myself rapt'.⁵⁴ Elsewhere he describes his soul as 'all bile, all spirit, all fire'.⁵⁵ In the ancient world bile had been associated with outstanding men, associated not only with melancholy but with inspiration of the ecstatic variety. But he too, like Bartoli, believed in balance, and in his etching, *The Genius of Salvator Rosa*, a youthful Liberty complements an old man carrying scales. Rosa was immensely skilled in self promotion, and throughout his career surrounded himself by literary men who praised his genius, often in terms

⁵¹ Longinus in Murray, *Classical Literary Criticism* 122.

⁵² On Allacci see Fumaroli M., "Crépuscule del l'enthousiasme au XVII^e siècle", in: *III Congrès Internationales d'Etudes Néolatines, Tours 1976* (Paris: 1980) 1279–1305; Fumaroli M., "Rhétorique d'école et rhétorique adulte: la réception européenne du Traité du Sublime au XVI et XVII^e siècles", *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 1 (1986) 36–51, and Nau, *Le Temps du Sublime* 32–34. Nau stresses how widely diffused the work was.

⁵³ For a discussion of Bartoli's doctrine of ingegno in Uomo di Lettere see Grana G., *Letteratura Italiana: I Minori* (Milan: 1974) 1681.

⁵⁴ Ruffo V., "Galleria Ruffo nel Secolo XVII in Messina", *Bollettino d'Arte* 10 (1916) 180. As given in Haskell F., *Patrons and Painters* (New York: 1963) 22. Haskell saw this as an anticipation of Romantic doctrine but it is rather an echo of Plato who in *Ion* 534 wrote 'the poet is a light creature, winged and holy, and is unable to compose until he is possessed and out of his mind, and his reason is no longer in him' (as given in Murray, *Genius: the History of an Idea* 18).

⁵⁵ Rosa, *Lettere* 1641–1671 201: 'tutto bile, tutto spirito, tutto fuoco'.

that suggest the grandeur of his aspirations. On making his debut in Rome, in 1638, with an astonishingly violent and macabre painting of *Tityus*, Rosa was heralded by Niccolò Simonelli as the *Demosthenes of Painting*;⁵⁶ Demosthenes, who 'may be likened to a thunderbolt or flash of lightning, as it were burning up or ravaging all that is before him' lies at the centre of Longinus' treatise.⁵⁷ The theme was taken up by Paolo Vendramin, who later wrote an astonishing letter about Rosa's *Prometheus*, marvelling at Prometheus' agonised cry, which robs the viewer of his senses, and creates a terror so profound that it seems to lie at the very heart of fear.⁵⁸ This terror, he writes, is born of beauty, the beauty of imitation which makes the artist a rival of nature. Prometheus' cry he likens to the thunderbolt of Apelles, as 'the irrepresentable of the sublime'.⁵⁹ To these contemporaries Rosa seemed a new kind of artist, with the power to create tragic and grand subjects of unparalleled power. In his landscapes, too, he seemed to have a godlike power as a creator; Paganino Gaudenzio, who had a particular interest in Longinus, and was a passionate admirer of the poetry of Lucretius, wrote of how Rosa, like the sun, spread the light of painting, creating a universe of sea and earth, and transporting hearts and souls towards the heavens.⁶⁰

In Rosa's latest paintings these ideas of genius and sublimity come together in two paintings, *Empedocles leaping into Etna*, and *Pan and Pindar*. These works, in their Greek subject matter, in their evocation of wonders of the ancient world, are related. Etna was the archetype of a smoking mountain, geographically close and well known for its frequent eruptions. It had long fascinated poets, and become the centre of a mythological landscape, associated with Vulcan and the Cyclops, the rape of Proserpine, and the death of Empedocles. For both the ancient world and the baroque Etna was a *meraviglia*, where snow and fire, night and day, came together. Pindar himself, in the first *Pythian Ode*, had written of the wonder of Etna, 'from whose inmost caves burst forth the purest founts

⁵⁶ Passeri G.B., *Vite de' pittori, scultori ed architetti che hanno lavorato in Roma morti dal 1641 al 1673*, ed. J. Hess (Leipzig – Vienna: 1934) 388. There is considerable controversy over the identity of this painting. It was perhaps the *Prometheus* now in the Galleria Corsini, Rome, or a painting of *Tityus* known only through an engraving by Ferdinando Gregori, or perhaps a third lost work.

⁵⁷ Longinus in Murray, *Classical Literary Criticism* 130.

⁵⁸ For Vendramin's letter see Volpi C., "Salvator Rosa: Nuove documenti e riflessioni sul primo periodo romano e su quello fiorentino", *Storia dell'Arte* 120, 20 (2008) 91–92.

⁵⁹ See above note 24.

⁶⁰ Gaudenzio Paganino, *La Galleria Dell'Inclito Marino* (Pisa, Ferdinando Chelli: 1648) 183.

of unapproachable fire, . . . amid the gloom of night, the ruddy flame, as it sweepeth along, with crashing din whirlleth rocks to the deep sea far below'.⁶¹ A characteristic 17th century account – and Etna was a *topos*, a favourite set piece for many authors – is that of Paganino Gaudenzio, who brings together poetry and science. Etna, he writes, is renowned for its beauty, a mythological landscape whose crater seems to breathe like a great animal, and the sounds which erupt from it strike the heart with terror. But it is also a proper study for the natural philosopher, and our wonder grows with the accounts of learned men.⁶² Kircher, one such learned man, as we have seen, in *Mundus Subterraneus*, described his descent into Etna, and illustrated his text with a dramatic illustration drawn from his own sketches.⁶³ Rosa's painting may well suggest a response to this book.

Empedocles (fl. 444 BC) was a philosopher and poet, a disciple of Pythagoras; he taught that the world is composed of four elements, earth, air, fire and water. Here Rosa paints his mystifying leap into Etna, a death explained in various ways. Diogenes Laertius writes that Empedocles was thought to be a god, and plunged into the fiery craters 'to confirm the report that he had become a god'. But the truth became known, for one of his bronze slippers was thrown up in the flames, revealing his mortal death. Diogenes Laertius mocked him, saying that he had fallen in rather than leapt.⁶⁴

The death of Empedocles was sometimes treated with irony, but Rosa's painting is majestic, and it is unlikely that this image is negative.⁶⁵ Here Rosa abandons the classical structure that had still characterised even his wildest landscapes of the 1650s and early 1660s, which retain that quality of balance often associated with the sublime. Sky, rocks and fiery crater are brought close to the frontal plane, and the entire surface seems shifting, unstable, threatening to engulf the spectator. Against it the tiny figure of Empedocles seems heroic, and the painter evokes the wonder and mystery of this legendary figure from the earliest era of human knowledge, who had written an immensely ambitious poem *On Nature*, and whose

⁶¹ Pindar, *The Odes of Pindar* (Cambridge – London: 1978) 157.

⁶² Gaudenzio Paganino, *Della Peregrinazione Filosofica* (Pisa, Amador Massi: 1643) 62–64.

⁶³ Kircher, *Mundus Subterraneus*, I, illustration between 186 and 187.

⁶⁴ Diogenes Laertius, *The lives of Eminent Philosophers* (Cambridge – London: 1925) VIII. 69 p. 383.

⁶⁵ Tertullian, for example, writes of him with both irony (*De Anima* 32, I) and admiration (*Ad Martyras* 4,5).

heirs were the heroic scientists of the 17th century. Empedocles' boundless aspiration recalls Longinus' image of divine winged steeds leaping into a cosmic distance,⁶⁶ and Lucretius' wonderful account of the heroism of Epicurus, who 'marched far beyond the flaming walls of the world, as he traversed the immeasurable universe in thought and imagination'.⁶⁷

The daring of Empedocles, who crossed all boundaries, may in a sense be paralleled in Pindar, who saw himself as a chosen individual, the prophet and the herald of the Muses.⁶⁸ Longinus himself wrote of Pindar as burning everything up before him, although, a flawed genius, he could fall into flatness;⁶⁹ Horace, in the *Odes*, likens him to a river rushing down the mountain side, free of all control. In Rosa's painting the satyr- god Pan, [Fig. 6] symbolic of all nature, his crook in one hand, and his pan pipes at his feet, appears suddenly, in all his strange wildness, before the poet. Pindar, crowned in laurels, pale and startled, lets fall his writing and gestures in astonishment. Behind him lurk two satyrs, spirits of the wood. Rosa's source lay in Plutarch, who, in the *Life of Numa*, discusses the love the gods may bear for men, and adds 'There is a legend, too, that Pan became enamoured of Pindar and his verses'.⁷⁰

Pindar's fame had grown throughout the 17th century, and Rosa would also have known the many fables that clustered around his name. He came to stand for a noble simplicity and grandeur, whose followers resisted the elaboration and complexity of much 17th verse. The famous poet Chiabrera and Urban VIII were both devotees, and wrote Pindaric verse. Longinus is clear that sublimity could not be achieved by nature alone, but he did stress that talent is innate, and that great thoughts are the echoes of noble souls, and it is through this grandeur that the writer can conceive and convey powerful emotion. Rosa's Pindar is a truly grand figure, alone and inspired in the wildness of nature, with the god of nature himself before him, summoning him to the heights. Only a little later Alessandro Guidi described Pindar taming Pan with his lyre, and summoning Guidi himself to a nobler, more passionate form of poetry, 'From my breast shines forth splendour and flashes of inspiration'.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Longinus in Murray, *Classical Literary Criticism* 123.

⁶⁷ Lucretius, *De Rerum Naturae* (Cambridge – London: 1928) 1.64.

⁶⁸ Murray, *Genius: the History of an Idea* 15.

⁶⁹ Longinus in Murray, *Classical Literary Criticism* 153.

⁷⁰ Plutarch, *Life of Numa* (Cambridge – London: 1967) vol. XI, IV.5.

⁷¹ Guidi A., *Rime*, http://www.letteraturaitaliana.net/pdf/Volume_6/t140.pdf (consulted: 2.11.2010), *Al Signor Cardinale Benedetto Pamphilij*, 12, v. 37: 'Escon dal petto mio splendori e lampi'.

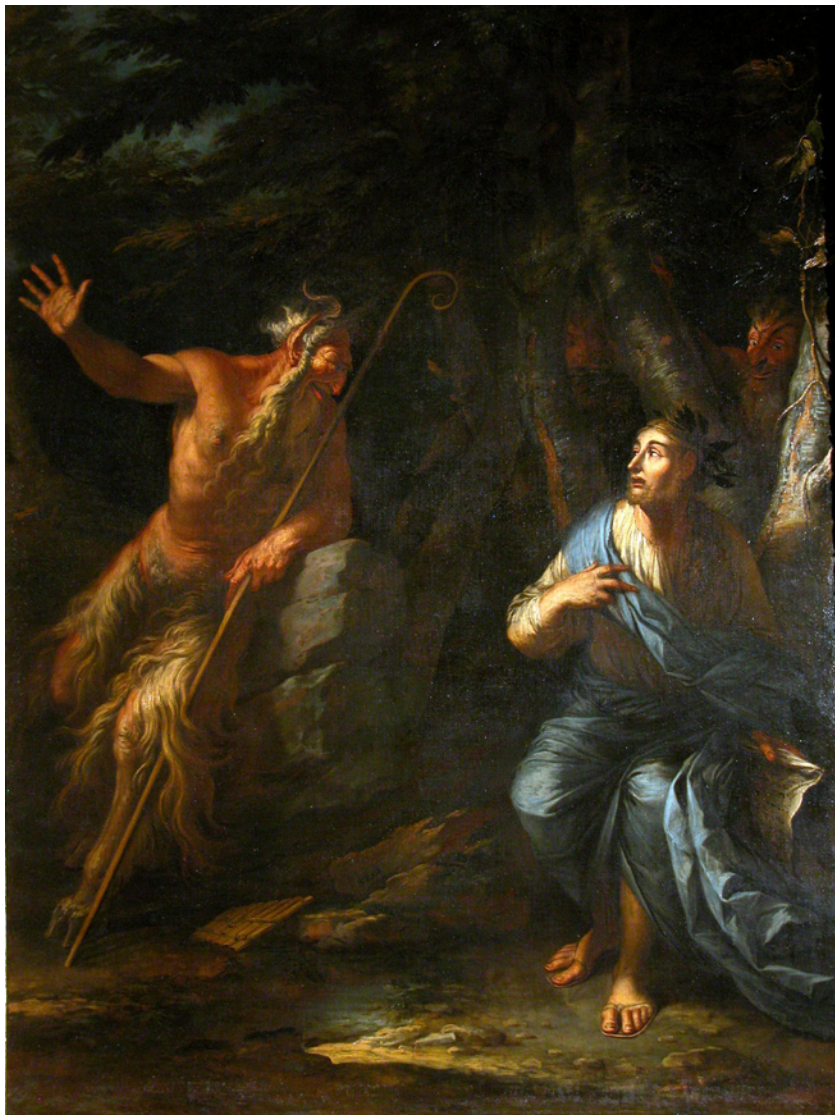


Fig. 6. Salvator Rosa, *Pan and Pindar*, 1666. Oil on canvas, 277 × 194 cm. Ariccia, Villa Chigi.

The sublime, wrote Longinus, amazes; it does not persuade or gratify, but transports with wonder, and exerts an irresistible force and mastery. It was this that ensured its appeal in the 17th century, and that fascinated Rosa, an artist obsessed with *novità*, with a desire to startle and amaze. His wild landscapes are rooted in a 17th century aesthetics of the infinite, and in a mystic tradition; his magic and marvels are part of a contemporary fascination with seeking out the secrets of nature. He shared a burgeoning interest in inspiration and enthusiasm, and in transcending the rules; his psychological intensity introduces new and disturbing passions. But although Rosa's intentions were profoundly different from those of the Romantics, his paintings of the 1660s are in a sense on the cusp, between *meraviglia* and the sublime. His landscapes introduce a sense of awe before nature's grandeur that transmutes into the 18th century sublime, while his dragons and spectres become part of its vocabulary. John Dennis, only a little after Rosa's death, was to write that Longinus' examples of the sublime are rooted in terror, and he lists the objects that inspire this emotion. They are 'Gods, Daemons, Hell, Spirits and Souls of Men, Miracles, Prodigies, Enchantments, Witchcraft, Thunder, Tempests, raging seas, Inundations, Torrents, Earthquakes, Volcanos, Monsters, Serpents, Lions, Tygers, Fire, War, Pestilence, Famine etc.'⁷² In the 18th century the Romantic idea of genius, as an extraordinary creative power, was born, and Pindar, wild and uncontrolled, shot to yet greater fame, the paradigm of a wild and untutored genius. Rosa's painting looks forward to this apotheosis, and for the Romantics he himself, savage, free, a self taught child of nature, rivalled the ancient poet.

⁷² As given in Monk, *The Sublime* 52.

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* While this article has been at the press, I curated an exhibition, *Salvator Rosa; Bandits, Wilderness and Magic*, held in 2010–2011 at Dulwich Picture Gallery, London and the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth. For further bibliography see the catalogue of the exhibition, by Helen Langdon, with Xavier F. Salomon and Caterina Volpi.

THE LONGINIAN SUBLIME, EFFECT AND AFFECT IN 'BAROQUE' BRITISH VISUAL CULTURE¹

Lydia Hamlett

The painter and theorist Jonathan Richardson's (1667–1745) writings on art encapsulate the multifaceted definition of a visual sublime and the struggle to define it before the publication of Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757).² The examples that Richardson offers of the sublime in art range in authorship, geography, chronology, genre and medium but, he stresses, all are useful to the critic for the strong interaction of their styles with the spectator. In the first edition of *An Essay on the Theory of Painting* (1715) Richardson proposes the art of Michelangelo as an exemplar of the sublime. In the second edition (1725) Raphael eclipses Michelangelo, and the author gives further examples of the sublime as an original sketch of a dying man by Rembrandt and an Annunciation by Federico Zuccaro (proposed in this essay as being an engraving of the frescos in the apse of the Jesuit church of Santa Maria Annunziata in Rome). In the interim, in the *Two Discourses* (1719), Richardson judged a portrait of the Countess Dowager of Exeter by Van Dyck to be sublime. This essay asks why a British theorist, who was well-acquainted with the classical rhetorical treatise *Peri Hypsous* by the Longinus,³ considered it appropriate to apply its rules directly to such diverse works of art, and considers what such judgements can tell us about the effects and affects of British art of the period.

Samuel H. Monk's seminal study on the sublime in England (first published in 1935) examines the development from what the author describes as a neo-classical to a romantic sublime, occurring largely over the course of the eighteenth century. In doing so, Monk plays down the

¹ The term 'Baroque' describes the period of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in Britain. This essay is a version of an online publication produced as part of the *The Sublime Object: Nature, Art and Language* in 2010, a project funded by the Landscape and Environment branch of the Arts and Humanities Research Council and based at Tate Britain.

² On Richardson see Gibson-Wood C., *Jonathan Richardson: art theorist of the English Enlightenment* (New Haven and London: 2000).

³ Henceforth called Longinus.

influence of Longinus's ancient text *Peri Hypsous* before this time.⁴ This essay re-examines the relationship of the sublime to visual culture over the two centuries from the rediscovery of Longinus to the publication of Burke. The impact of Longinus's *Peri Hypsous* on the visual arts or even on rhetoric in Britain (as acknowledged by Monk)⁵ is not easily determined; but the period of renewed interest in the *Peri Hypsous* coincided with a time when effect and affect were especially important and when church and state were attracted to powerful persuasive rhetorical systems both in Britain and the rest of Europe.⁶

William Sanderson's Graphice (1658)

The impact of Longinus on English, and indeed European, art and theory has not yet been fully investigated, and it is pertinent to point out that *Peri Hypsous* almost certainly had more of an impact on seventeenth and early eighteenth-century art and art theory than previously thought. Although this essay is concerned primarily with the theories of Jonathan Richardson, who certainly used and quoted directly from Longinus, it is useful to read his work in the context of a tradition of Longinian influence. A few years after Longinus's treatise on rhetoric was first translated into English by John Hall in 1652, the historian Sir William Sanderson published his own treatise on the art of graphics, the flavour of which is summed up by Edmond Gayton's eulogy to the author at the beginning, 'What Colours in our Rhetorick, can show Thine, which more various are, than those 'ith Bow?'.⁷ The first half of the work intends to persuade us of the potential power of art and the second part divulges the practicalities of how to achieve it. Essentially Sanderson aims to do for the visual arts what Longinus had done for rhetoric, and in doing so he mirrors many of the terms used by Hall in his translation of Longinus: 'For Poesie is a speaking Picture, and Picture is a silent Poesie . . . In both, an astonishment of wonder; by Painting to stare upon imitation of Nature, leading and guiding

⁴ Monk S.H., *The Sublime, A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-century England* (Ann Arbor: 1960), 1–9, 18–22, 27. See also Rosenberg A., *Longinus in England bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: 1917).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶ *Peri Hypsous* was published in England in 1636 in Latin and Greek and first translated into English by John Hall in 1652 as *On the Height of Eloquence*, thereafter in several English translations as *On the Sublime*. Monk, *The Sublime* 19–22.

⁷ E. Gayton, 'Upon our English Zeuxis, W. Sanderson, Esquire', in Sanderson William, *Graphice* (London, R. Crofts: 1658).

our Passions, by that beguiling power, which we see exprest; and to ravish the mind most, when they are drunke in by the eyes'.⁸ Sanderson's use of words, such as 'raising', 'ravishing', 'astonishing' and 'beguiling' amongst others, echo Hall but are instead used to describe the powerful effects of sight, rather than sound or language, on the spectator.⁹

As if to offer a direct riposte to Hall, Sanderson imitates specific sections from Longinus including the five ingredients he lists to achieve greatness in art, just as the ancient writer had done for attaining rhetorical sublimity. Hall's translation, comparing the five 'rich fountains of Sublime Eloquence' to the foundational pillars of a building, includes vastness of thought; fierce and transporting passion; a right fashioning and variation of figures; generous and select phrase, and nobility and beauty of disposition.¹⁰ In comparison, Sanderson offers 'Invention, Proportion, Colour, Motion, Disposition', as the five paths to achieving artistic sublimity.¹¹ There are also thematic borrowings from Longinus in Sanderson's text, including *Fiat Lux* in Genesis, which the latter turns to his own advantage by concentrating not on the majestic simplicity of the words but to the primary importance of light, thus supporting the view reiterated throughout that sight is first amongst the senses.¹²

Sanderson, like Longinus, is keen to point out that his audience should be universal: 'all sorts of people, wise and weak, ignorant and Learned, Men and Women, one and all, may find in it, to be delighted, which comes now to be a Wonder'.¹³ But both were published during the Commonwealth and clearly had religious and political biases. Hall prefaces his translation with a call for the Commonwealth government to use rhetoric effectively to their audiences; whilst the royalist Sanderson emphasised the persuasive effects of art – both easel and large-scale interiors – on the spectator.¹⁴

⁸ Ibid., 13. The beginning of this quotation is taken from Simonides.

⁹ See especially *ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰ Hall John, *Dionysius Longinus of the Height of Eloquence* (London, R. Daniel: 1652) XII; Smith William, *Dionysius Longinus on the sublime: translated from the Greek, with notes and observations, and some account of the life, writings, and character of the author* (London, J. Watts: 1739) VIII, 16.

¹¹ Sanderson, *Graphice* 50–1. Later, Richardson gives them as Grace, Greatness, Invention, Expression and Composition. Richardson Jonathan, *An Essay on the Theory of Painting* (London, A. Bettesworth: 1725) 249.

¹² Longinus (1652) XVII; Sanderson, *Graphice* 3.

¹³ Longinus (1739) I, 3–5; Sanderson, *Graphice* 51.

¹⁴ On *Fiat Lux*, as well as the political context of John Hall's writing, see the essay in this publication by Caroline Van Eck, "Figuring the Sublime in English Church Architecture 1640–1730". See also Norbrook D., *Writing the English Republic, Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics*,

*Italian Baroque Art (Rhetoric, Sublimity)
and its British Translations*

It may be due to a common interest in effect and affect in Italian and British art that Jonathan Richardson thought it appropriate to list, as one of two key examples of the sublime in art, an Annunciation by Federico Zuccaro (fl.c.1555–1609).¹⁵ The Annunciation to which the writer referred has not been identified; though, due to the fact that it was singled out for comment in this context, it is crucial to our understanding of what was meant by the sublime in Richardson's lifetime and previously.¹⁶ The work that Richardson probably describes is an engraving of a fresco which formed part of a large-scale artistic scheme at the Jesuit church of Santa Maria Annunziata in Rome [Fig. 1].¹⁷ Although Richardson could not have seen the fresco (the church was destroyed in 1626), he was surely aware of the various engravings of it, his interest sparked by the fact that he owned a compositional study for the work by Zuccaro himself.¹⁸ What is interesting is that Richardson applies the term 'sublime' to the composition of a vast mural: on this occasion in an ecclesiastical setting but of a genre which was equally popular in secular and domestic spaces across Italy, and later adapted to the English court and country house interiors.¹⁹

It is the aspects of Zuccaro's Annunciation that Richardson says make it 'sublime' that are perhaps most revealing. Having labelled the two narrative protagonists, the Virgin and the angel Gabriel, unremarkable, he instead marvels at the vastness of the heavens and the innumerable

1627–1660 (Cambridge: 2000), and Norbrook D., "Milton, Lucy Hutchinson, and the Lucretian Sublime", *Tate Papers* online, 13 (2010).

¹⁵ Richardson Jonathan, *An Essay on the Theory of Painting* (London, W. Bowyer: 1715) 254; Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson* 177.

¹⁶ On Richardson's collection see Gibson-Wood C., "A Judiciously Disposed Collection: Jonathan Richardson Senior's cabinet of drawings", in Baker C.- Elam C. – Warwick G. (eds.), *Collecting Prints and Drawings in Europe c.1500–1750* (Aldershot: 2003) 155–71.

¹⁷ On Federico Zuccaro at Santa Maria Annunziata: Bailey G.A., *Between Renaissance and Baroque, Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565–1610* (London: 2003) 116–7.

¹⁸ The engravings came from a drawing done specifically for the medium by Zuccaro and then engraved by Cornelis Cort in 1571, later copied by Girolamo Olgiati in 1572 and Raphaël Sadeler in 1580: Bury M., *The Print in Italy 1550–1620* (London: 2001) figs. 4, 74 and nos. 74–75, 114–6. The chalk study owned by Richardson is now in the British Museum, collection no. 1943, 113.24.

¹⁹ Gombrich E.H., *Means and Ends, Reflections on the History of Fresco Painting* (London: 1976).



Fig. 1. Girolamo Olgiati after Cornelis Cort, after Federico Zuccaro, *The Annunciation with Prophets and music-making angels*, 1572, engraving, 466 × 679 mm, British Museum. Image © The Trustees of the British Museum.

rejoicing angels that convey the subject.²⁰ He is struck by the awe-inspiring effects of the whole, its hints at eternity and infinitude, and it is this that causes him to pronounce the picture 'sublime'. More recently Michael Bury has described how, 'The heavenly vision above, through the brilliant handling of light and shade, gives the most spectacular effect of infinite space'.²¹ Whilst Richardson did not see the work in the magnificent architecture for which it was intended, it was the norm to describe the effects of paintings from engravings and he is also perfectly within the bounds of the seventeenth and early eighteenth-century practice of describing both real and imagined artistic interiors. He is surely using his imagination in this passage, projecting the engraving into its original, elevated context in the apse over the main altar of the church.

In Italy the function of much Counter Reformation art was not only to persuade the viewer of the power and truth of Roman Catholicism but also, crucially, to move him to become active in his faith.²² This it had in common with rediscovered classical expositions on rhetoric and most obviously with Longinus's essay on the sublime, its own stated aim being not merely to persuade but to move, both through content and composition. Indeed the Jesuits themselves looked to Longinus for advice on how to best achieve this.²³ The Jesuit monk and artist Andrea dal Pozzo (1642–1709) produced one of the most celebrated ecclesiastical examples of decorated ceilings, at the conventual church of Sant' Ignazio in Rome, the designs for which were detailed in his *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum* (1693–1700).²⁴ As Nicholas Savage has remarked, the text and illustrations of this work 'are intended to serve as a practical guide to the art of *quadratura*', just as Longinus's essay is a practical guide to the sublime rhetorical style: moreover, the ultimate aim of each is to affect.²⁵ Pozzo's own stated aim is to surprise the viewer, through illusions – for example by transforming real architecture through painting – and by perspectival mastery.²⁶ The idea was not to show real architecture according to

²⁰ Richardson (1715), *Essay* 254.

²¹ Bury, *Print in Italy* 115.

²² Levy E., *Propaganda and the Jesuit Baroque* (Los Angeles and London: 2004) chap. 4.

²³ Gilby E., *Sublime Worlds* (London: 2006) 2–3.

²⁴ On Pozzo's frescos at Sant' Ignazio see De Feo V – Martinelli V. (eds.), *Andrea Pozzo* (Milan: 1996) 66–93. On Pozzo, his art, perspective and the Jesuit contribution see essays by various authors in Battisti A, et al., *Andrea Pozzo* (Milan: 1996) espec. 133–40.

²⁵ Savage N, et al., *Early Printed Books 1478–1840*, 5 Vols., vol. III (London: 1999) 1541.

²⁶ Pozzo Andrea dal (ed. James John and illus. Sturt John), *Rules and Examples of Perspective proper for Painters and Architects* (London: 1707) figs. 30, 71 & 80.

Vitruvian rules but rather to create an illusion that will have an impact – even an unsettling one – on the viewer below.²⁷ In the nave ceiling in the same church Pozzo uses one point of sight, for which the most advantageous position (meaning the most convincing, and therefore the most affecting) is marked by a marble disc on the floor of the nave below.²⁸

The first volume of Pozzo's treatises on perspective (the original two volumes of which were in Latin and Italian) was published in English in 1707, dedicated to Queen Anne and subscribed to by the architects Wren, Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor.²⁹ In his dedication to Queen Anne, the illustrator John Sturt notes the monarch's patronage of Verrio as well as her support of the regeneration of Whitehall, St. Paul's, Greenwich Hospital, and Blenheim.³⁰ It was translated into English by 'Mr John James of Greenwich', then assistant to Hawksmoor, around the same time that Thornhill was beginning the decoration of the Painted Hall there (1707–27) [Fig. 2].³¹ Indeed Thornhill appears to be offering a British, secular version of Pozzo's great ecclesiastical ceiling, employing the same overwhelming abundance of detail and dramatic perspectival devices, this time in order to persuade us of the power and glory of the Protestant monarchy – through William and Mary – and rivalling the image of the apotheosis of St Ignatius, shown rising heavenwards to be received by Christ and the Virgin.³² Similar devices were practised by Rubens a century earlier in the Banqueting House at Whitehall, in order to persuade the spectator of the Divine Right of the King James I [Fig. 3].³³ In both British examples multiple points of perspective are given to different effects but with the same aim as Pozzo's single point perspective: to maximise the viewing experience as

²⁷ Ibid., fig. 91.

²⁸ On the use of linear perspective as a rhetorical strategy see Van Eck C., *Classical Rhetoric and the Visual Arts in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: 2007) 73.

²⁹ It was published again c. 1725. On the various printed editions of Pozzo see Savage et al., *Early Printed Books* 1539–48, espec. nos. 2612 and 2613.

³⁰ Pozzo (1707), *Rules and Examples* Dedication.

³¹ I am grateful to Richard Johns of the National Maritime Museum for bringing this to my attention. On John James see Harris E., *British Architectural Books and Writers 1556–1785* (Cambridge: 1990) 242–5.

³² Vaughan W., *British painting: the golden age from Hogarth to Turner* (New York 1999) 111; Bold, J., et al., *Greenwich, An Architectural History of the Royal Hospital for Seamen and the Queen's House* (New Haven and London: 2000) 145–53.

³³ For example, Strong R., 'Britannia Triumphans', in *The Tudor and Stuart Monarchy: Pageantry, Painting, Iconography: III Jacobean and Caroline* (Woodbridge: 1998).



Fig. 2. Sir James Thornhill, *William III and Queen Mary, with Peace and Liberty triumphing over Tyranny*, c. 1707–12, oil on plaster, Lower Hall ceiling, The Painted Hall, Greenwich Hospital. Image © Greenwich Foundation for the Old Royal Naval College.



Fig. 3. Sir Peter Paul Rubens, *Apotheosis of James I and other studies*, c. 1628–30, oil on panel, 947 × 630 mm, sketch for the Banqueting House ceiling, Tate Collection. Purchased with assistance from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, Tate Members, the Art Fund in memory of Sir Oliver Millar (with a contribution from the Wolfson Foundation) Viscount and Viscountess Hampden and Family, Monument Trust, Manny and Brigitta Davidson and the Family, and other donors 2008. Image © Tate.

well as to uplift the spectator.³⁴ Moreover it appeared to have the desired effect. Richard Steele visited the Painted Hall at Greenwich on Tuesday 11th May 1715, and claimed that it was not, 'in the Power of Words to raise too great an Idea of the Work . . . The whole raises in the Spectator the most lively Images of Glory and Victory, and cannot be beheld without much Passion and Emotion'.³⁵ This inability to describe something is key to the discourse on the sublime: it is John Hall's 'somewhat which I cannot expresse',³⁶ later expanded upon by other writers on the sublime including Lambert Ten Kate, Nicolas Boileau and Jonathan Richardson.³⁷ It is also documented in the reception of various works of art and architecture, such as in Daniel Defoe's 1725 account of being affected by the sight of Cannons: 'This palace is so beautiful in its situation, so lofty, so majestick the appearance of it, that a pen can but ill describe it . . . 'tis only fit to be talk'd of upon the very spot'.³⁸

Word and Image: 'Decorative' History Painting in Britain

The debt that British architects owed to classical literature in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is the subject of much recent scholarship.³⁹ But what of the painting which was planned alongside the architecture? Both painting and architecture were part of an ensemble and intended to complement the functions of rooms which, in turn, were often linked to the written or spoken word, whether as libraries or as arenas for diplomatic speeches, theatre or even private conversation. The effect is achieved in art in different ways from those in rhetoric but, as Monk says, the aims and effects themselves are not so different.⁴⁰ The

³⁴ The perspective of Rubens' ceiling was examined in Highmore J., *A Critical Examination of those Two Paintings on the Ceiling of the Banqueting-house at Whitehall* (London: 1754). For Pozzo on single-point perspective, see Pozzo (1707), *Rules and Examples* fig. 100.

³⁵ Steele Richard, *The Lover* (London: 1715) 189–95, no. 33.

³⁶ Hall in Longinus (1652) Dedication.

³⁷ Marin L., "On the Sublime, Infinity, Je Ne Sais Quoi", in Hollier D. (ed.), *A New History of French Literature* (Boston and London: 1994) 340–45.

³⁸ Defoe Daniel, *A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, 2 Vols., vol. II (London: 1725) Letter III, 8.

³⁹ Hart V., *Sir John Vanbrugh, Storyteller in Stone* (New Haven and London: 2008); Van Eck C., "Longinus's Essay on the Sublime and the 'Most Solemn and Awfull Appearance' of Hawksmoor's Churches", *The Georgian Group Journal*, vol. XV (2006) 1–7; Van Eck, "Figuring the Sublime".

⁴⁰ Monk, *The Sublime* 12.

link between the painted interior and its function is key to understanding its original meaning, and the idea of *ut pictura poesis* – that painting and poetry could be judged by the same means – was widely propounded by art theorists of the time.⁴¹ The works of Roger De Piles were also widely translated in Britain, who described the grand Gusto in painting thus: 'Tis by this that ordinary Things are made Beautiful, and the Beautiful, Sublime and Wonderful; for in Painting, the grand Gusto, the Sublime and the Marvellous are one and the same thing. Language indeed is wanting, but everything speaks in a good Picture'.⁴² Long before this translation, William Sanderson, as discussed above, had put his weight behind the power of art above that of the word: it would be unrealistic to imagine that British decorative-history schemes were divorced from such debate.

Many British painted ceilings were closely linked with the word, either through their narrative schemes or through the importance of speech in terms of their functions, for example as a setting for rhetorical – dramatic or political – performances. This started, arguably, with Rubens' ceiling in the Banqueting House at Whitehall and continued throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.⁴³ In 1668 the artist Robert Streeter decorated the ceiling of the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford, a space intended for staging the public ceremonial of the university [Fig. 4].⁴⁴ A year later a paean to the ceiling was published by Robert Whitehall, who contrasted it favourably with both ancient structures and Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling. The poem has been ridiculed ever since, not only because of its own exaggerated rhetoric but crucially because it was seen to exaggerate the effects of the artwork it described. Nonetheless, some passages reveal important truths about the effects and affects of contemporary ceiling paintings: 'These to the life are drawn so curiously / That the beholder would become all Eye: / Or at the least an Argus so sublime / A phant'sie

⁴¹ For example, French artist-theorists including Charles Du Fresnoy in *De arte graphica* had already paved the way for painting and poetry to be admired by the same criteria. Lee, R.W., *Ut pictura poesis: the humanistic theory of painting* (New York: 1967) 5. See also Hagstrum J., *The Sister Arts* (Chicago 1958) chap. 1; Praz M., *Mnemosyne, the parallel between literature and the visual arts* (Oxford: 1970) chap. 1; Vickers B., *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford: 1987) chap. 7; Braider C., *Refiguring the Real, picture and modernity in word and image, 1400–1700* (Princeton New Jersey: 1993) 3–19.

⁴² English translation of De Piles Roger, *The art of painting and the lives of the painters* (London: 1706) 19.

⁴³ The precise functions are debated by Thurley S., *Whitehall Palace, An Architectural History of the Royal Apartments, 1240–1698* (New Haven and London: 1999).

⁴⁴ Geraghty A., "Wren's Preliminary Design for the Sheldonian Theatre", *Architectural History*, 45 (2002) 275–288.

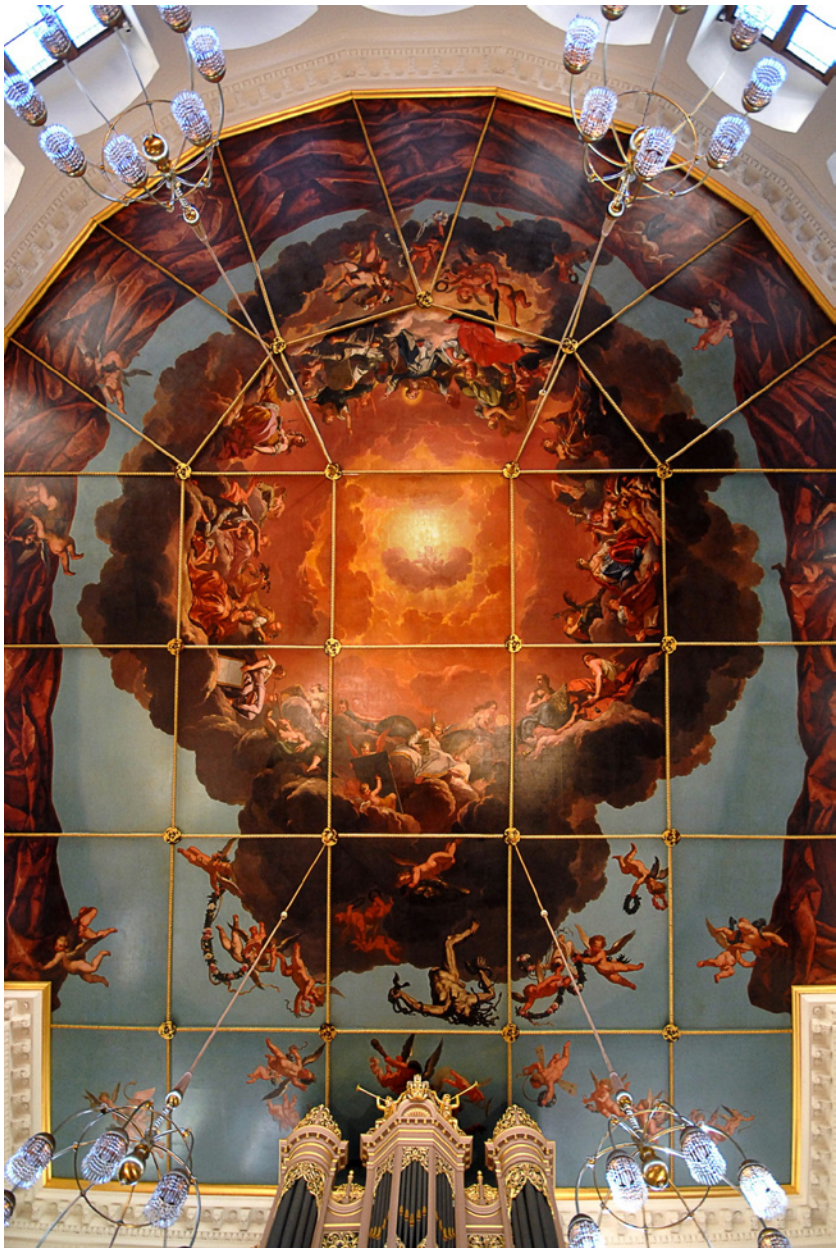


Fig. 4. Robert Streeter, *Truth with Allegories of the Arts and Sciences, and Envy, Rapine and Ignorance overcome by Minerva, Hercules and Mercury*, c. 1668–69, oil on canvas, Sheldonian Theatre ceiling, Oxford. Image © Photovibe/Greg Smolonski.

makes essayes to Heaven to climb / That future ages must confess they owe / To STREETER more than Michel Angelo'.⁴⁵ This passage describes the fantastical effects of the imagery as uplifting, paralleling the effect on us with venturing into the heavens shown in the painting, so overwhelming that the spectator becomes all-consumed by the images. The poem's dedication also opens up a more general point about the function of contemporary ceiling designs: 'Our Theatre, though 'tis / beautifull, in you / Alone it lies to make it vocall, now: / And things inanimate so to inspire / As Orpheus did with his enchanting Lyre. / Your various tongues may teach youth how to please / More than Quintilian or Demosthenes . . .'.⁴⁶ Addressed to the Oxford Chancellor, this passage suggests that in order to achieve its full inspiring effect the painting should be pushed to go beyond itself, animated by language. It also mentions Quintilian and Demosthenes, who were cited as sublime rhetoricians by Longinus.

Samuel Pepys wrote about a visit to the house of Streeter, whom he described as 'the famous history-painter', where he, 'found him and Dr. Wren and several virtuosos looking upon the paintings which he is making for the new Theatre at Oxford: and indeed they look as if they would be very fine, and the rest think better than those of Rubens in the Banqueting house at White Hall, but I do not so fully think so. But they will certainly be very noble; and I am mightily pleased to have the fortune to see this man and his work, which is very famous'.⁴⁷ This passage is illuminating because it endows both the painter and his art with a gravitas that we would not necessarily afford them now: it describes Streeter as a painter of 'histories' rather than as a 'decorative' artist and calls his designs 'noble'. It reveals, too, that influential figures in the visual arts were impressed by his work – including the architect Christopher Wren. Most importantly it implies a conscious development of mural painting as a genre in Britain, with Streeter proposed as being in serious competition with Rubens's ceiling at the Banqueting House (only the author himself doubts it).

There are many other examples of painted interiors being complicit in the role of the spaces they adorned where either the spoken or written word was key, suggesting that painting was far from a static backdrop to private or public life but rather very much a part of the action.

⁴⁵ Whitehall Robert, *Urania, or a Description of the Painting of the Top of the Theater at Oxon, as the Artist lay'd his Design* (London: 1669) 7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁷ Pepys S., ed. Lord Braybrooke, *The diary of Samuel Pepys, Esq., F.R.S., from 1659 to 1669, with memoir* (London: 1879) February 1st 1668–9, 560.

Tessa Murdoch quotes a letter from John, 2nd Duke of Montagu, about the paintings by Louis Chéron at his country house, Boughton, written to the antiquary William Stukeley [Fig. 5]: 'You remember her figure is in the ceiling of my hall at Boughton, which figure some philosophers imagine was formed there by the streams of your toasts daily repeated here, and ascending from the table towards the heavens; which if they had not been stopped by the ceiling, would have formed a better or finer constellation than that of Andromeda, but not being able to make their way through the roof of the Hall they condensed themselves into the figure of Hebe in the ceiling'.⁴⁸ Although used by Murdoch as an example of how attitudes towards such works changed from their original purely allegorical meaning, the letter was written a mere twenty years after Chéron's death during which the theory of painting had changed



Fig. 5. Louis Chéron, *Hercules presented to Hebe* (detail), c. 1707, oil on plaster, Great Hall ceiling, Boughton House. Image © Lydia Hamlett, by kind permission of The Trustees of the 9th Duke of Buccleuch's Chattels Fund.

⁴⁸ Murdoch T. (ed.), *Boughton House, The English Versailles* (London: 1992), 67.

little. The author of the letter not only acknowledges the iconography of the painting but also describes the effect of its composition and, in turn, links this to the wider function of the room. Whilst Chéron's subjects are undoubtedly allegorical, then, he too, as the maker of the murals, must surely have considered as equally important their effects on the location and their relationship with the spectator below. The idea of the metamorphosis of Stukeley's spoken words, floating heavenwards and being caught just under the ceiling where they transform into a literal figure of speech – where had they been allowed to travel even further they would have become stars – is at once flattering to the recipient of the letter and pure *fantasia*. The passage is extraordinary not only for the way in which it demonstrates a contemporary concern with linking speech and visual imagery but also because it is closely related to the etymological meaning of the sublime, literally 'under the lintel' (in architecture, the height threshold of a building). The idea that words travel upwards to heaven and transform themselves into images is at once sublime and key to our understanding of the art of this time.

Even Alexander Pope who, as discussed below, led the taste debates of the early eighteenth century in favour of a less flamboyant style of country house decoration, acknowledged that the purpose of painted interiors was to animate the space: 'Then, from her roof when Verrio's colours fall, / And leave inanimate the naked wall'.⁴⁹ The Longinian sublime animated everything that it touched, and the strength of painted interiors relied just as heavily on their composition as on their relationship with the room as a space; rather than providing a static allegorical backdrop, they were instead intended to be animated by, and interact with, the activity contained within.

Sublime Iconography

Over the course of the seventeenth century visual representations of apotheosis and the classical gods were brought into the domestic sphere and became major themes of decorative history-painting, employed by almost every regal and aristocratic authority in Europe for both private and

⁴⁹ Pope Alexander, *Windsor Forest* (first published 1713) lines 307–08.

public commissions.⁵⁰ The Muses, too, were employed to represent as they do the link between men and the gods. Rather than being viewed as simply allegorical, however, they were used for effect as compositional devices. Whether arranged as a figural cornice at the edges of a ceiling (for example in the Blenheim Saloon ceiling painting by Orazio Gentileschi, transferred to Marlborough House in 1713) or stretching the divide between humans and the gods (such as in the pilasters in Laguerre's staircase at Petworth House), they were frequently used as the architecture bridging the leap between the earthly and heavenly realms. As such the iconographical themes represent the patron's own aspirations to greatness, and even to immortal recognition. William Sanderson describes the creation of an otherworldliness within the aristocratic house which supports such an assertion: 'To give a Picture its value, in respect of the use: We may consider, that God hath created the whole universe for Man; the Microcosm whereof, is contracted into each Mans Mansion House, or Home, wherein he enjoys the usus-fructus of himself'.⁵¹

In its very conception and iconography the painted ceiling appears to illustrate Longinus's question, 'what do we most resemble the gods?'.⁵² We are treated to a view of the heavens in secular architectural settings, to witness an apotheosis that appears to demonstrate how such a deification of man might occur – from Rubens's James I at Whitehall to Thornhill's William and Mary at Greenwich or the Glorification of the Duke of Marlborough at Blenheim. In this sense the patron propelled himself into glory from his own 'Theatre of his Hospitality',⁵³ recalling Longinus's words: '[Nature] placed him in the World, as in a crowded Theatre, not to be an idle Spectator, but spurr'd-on by an eager Thirst of excelling ardently to contend in the Pursuit of Glory. For this purpose she implanted in his Soul an invincible Love of Grandeur, and a constant Emulation of whatever seems to approach nearer to Divinity than himself'.⁵⁴ In many other examples, such as Boughton House, we are treated to a more intimate association with the gods, who are brought into the earthly sphere almost as household guests themselves, the same characters reappearing in familiar form in each room, not only depicted as being the same size as us but

⁵⁰ The most comprehensive survey of painted interiors in England is Croft-Murray E., *Decorative Painting in England 1537–1837* (London: 1962).

⁵¹ Sanderson, *Graphice* 15.

⁵² Longinus (1739) I, 2.

⁵³ Wotton Henry, *The Elements of Architecture* (London: 1624) 82.

⁵⁴ Longinus (1739) XXXV, 84–86.

also indulging in the same mundane pursuits. This surprising bathos has the effect of meeting the gods half-way: we are required to elevate our gaze into the heavens to see them, but when we do we are helped in our reach by their similarity to us.

Depictions of the heavens inevitably become a trope for sublime transport, because they show a progression into infinite space, but also because through compositional manipulations we are drawn upwards into them, by abundant ethereal clouds or soaring architectural edifices (of which the obelisk was most popular), such as in Francesco Sleter's Dining Room ceiling at Grimsthorpe Castle [Fig. 6].⁵⁵ They represent in the most literal sense man's endeavour to reach *hypsous*. Undoubtedly the original spectator was supposed to be dazzled by allegory, his mind filled with patriotic thoughts as well as awe and admiration for his host. But the painted



Fig. 6. Francesco Sleter, *Allegories of the Liberal Arts with classical deities*, c. 1729, State Dining room ceiling, Grimsthorpe Castle. Image © Lydia Hamlett, by kind permission of Grimsthorpe and Drummond Castle Trust.

⁵⁵ The Lucretian version of the sublime, associating it with infinite space, may also have played a role here, as many of the owners of country houses were involved in its translation. See Norbrook, "Milton, Lucy Hutchinson, and the Lucretian Sublime".

interior is even more interactive and affecting than this. We are intended to react to it, identify with it, be persuaded into or upto it, and be moved by it. Even at the beginning of the era of the painted ceiling in Britain the effects of paintings and the importance of their positioning for impact was being explored, as Sanderson describes: 'Picture become the sides of your Staire-case; when the grace of a Painting invites your guest to breathe, and stop at the ease-pace, and to delight him, with some Ruine . . . And a Piece over-head, to cover the Sieling, at the top-landing to be fore-shortened, in figures looking downward, out of the Clouds with Garlands or Cornucopias, to bid welcome'.⁵⁶

Assemblies of the gods are common in painted ceilings but some ancient figures including Apollo, Mercury and Hercules, were particularly popular. They represent divine inspiration, the liberal arts as a route from man to immortality, and in Hercules a demi-god whose narrative was often identified with the endeavours of the patron. While these characters scaled the heights of Olympus, those that aimed too high and failed – for example Phaeton or Icarus – were also frequently represented, perhaps to remind their patrons of the dangers of hubris.⁵⁷ Euripides' vivid description of Phaeton was used by Longinus as an example of the true spirit of tragedy being conveyed to the receiver and, on other occasions, Longinus uses the metaphor of soaring high both to illustrate the necessity of the attempt in order to become truly great as well as to warn against arrogance and bombast.⁵⁸ Both Mercury and Phaeton were chosen by the engraver William Marshall (fl. c.1617–50) to illustrate the frontispiece to the Latin translation of *Peri Hypsous* published in Oxford in 1636 [Fig. 7].⁵⁹ Mercury, as the god of Eloquence, represents the power of rhetoric to reach to the sublime. Phaeton, son of Apollo, represents what happens when you reach too far and self-destruct, and as such is later satirised in Hogarth's engraving

⁵⁶ Sanderson, *Graphice* 26.

⁵⁷ The flight and fall of Phaeton was represented in many country houses (especially on staircases), for example at Montagu House, Castle Howard, Uffington, Chatsworth and Houghton. The narrative of Phaeton's life in general was also popular. On the story of Phaeton and its rediscovery see Diggle J., *Euripides Phaethon* (Cambridge: 1970) and, on the iconography of Phaeton in relation to Castle Howard, Saumarez-Smith C., *The Building of Castle Howard* (London 1990) 105–8.

⁵⁸ Longinus (1739) XV, 41; XXXIII, 78–81, and II, 4–5; III, 6.

⁵⁹ The frontispiece is catalogued (though not fully explained) in Corbett M. – Norton M., *Engraving in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*, 3 Vols., vol. III (Cambridge: 1964) 170, n. 199, pl. 81c.



Fig. 7. William Marshall, *Mercury and Phaeton with other figures*, engraved title page to *Peri Hypsous* (Oxford, J. Webb: 1636). Image © The Trustees of the British Museum.

of Bathos in his *Tail Piece*.⁶⁰ Central to the composition above the title is Mercury, with the blazing sun to the left and the caption 'Graiiis dedit ore rotundo Musa loqui' ('The Muse has granted it to the Graiae to speak with one voice'), perhaps a reference to the fact that Mercury could grant even the Graiae – three mythological old women who shared an eye and tooth – the ability to speak with one united, authoritative voice. In the heavens to the right a disembodied, bearded head peeps from the clouds – presumably Jupiter – claiming that, 'Os Homini Sublime' ('the face for man is turned heavenward'). To the left of the title an eagle – symbolic of Apotheosis – soars upwards with the caption 'In Sublime feror' ('I am borne into the sublime'). Underneath him the lion skin and toga-clad Hercules speaks to a crowd, lines of speech converted into strings connecting each of their heads to his mouth from which he utters, 'Cedant arma togae' ('Let weapons yield to the toga'), the garment being symbolic of governmental law and peace. To the right of the title Phaeton appears to shout, 'Animos aequabit Olimpo' ('He shall bring souls level with Olympus'), his chariot soaring downwards and his horses plunging head-first. Underneath are black thunderclouds and arrows of lightning, amongst them the text 'tonitura Mentis – Humanas motura' ('bursts of thunder about to move human minds'). Finally, there is an open book which reads in both Latin and Greek, 'from this source you will learn how to speak', referring of course to Longinus's handbook on rhetoric which it introduces.

Sublimity, Protestantism and Britishness

As suggested at the start of this essay, it is the sheer diversity of Jonathan Richardson's examples of a visual sublime that reveals the ambiguity with which the sublime was viewed until the second half of the eighteenth century in Britain. For as much as Richardson admired surprise and abundance in art, he also wrote about morality and simplicity as being a part of the creation of the sublime. In his writings on the morally uplifting effects of portraits in the second edition of his *Essay* (1725) he singled out Van Dyck's *Countess Dowager of Exeter* as one in particular which would cause the spectator to behave better (that is, it had a sublime function). He picked out as another example of the sublime a sketch by Rembrandt

⁶⁰ On the 'Tail Piece' see Paulson R., *Hogarth*, 3 Vols., vol. III (Cambridge: 1994) 422–25.

of a deathbed scene. These were undoubtedly choices based on the principles of Longinus, whose writings on the sublime (which Richardson knew well and quoted from directly) highlighted both the power of the sublime to influence our responses and the simplicity of composition as being a route to majestic effect. The notion, that less could indeed be more, mirrored the development of aesthetic judgements during Richardson's lifetime, and the increasing emphasis on artistic clarity for impact. In his apparently confused choice of diametrically opposed artistic styles, Richardson was in fact simply demonstrating the shift in a sublime aesthetic away from its contemporary association with the (Catholic) Baroque style to one that was more suited to (Protestant) Britishness.⁶¹

The early eighteenth-century spectator was increasingly ambivalent towards the effects of decorative-history painting. This is reflected in what appears to be a disagreement on the subject in the pages of *The Spectator* between its two founders. Richard Steele's account of his visit to the Painted Hall at Greenwich quoted above, in which he was clearly greatly moved, has as its epigraph 'Animum pictura pascit', taken from Virgil's *Aeneid* Book I, line 464.⁶² Crucially he omits the adjective 'inani', which Joseph Addison had included in an epigraph for one of his own entries in *The Spectator* four years previously on his famous piece on time improving our appreciation of painting, later caricatured by Hogarth.⁶³ Addison's piece implied that it was not painting itself that was capable of great impact but only our retrospective view of it, hence his inclusion of the word 'inani', meaning empty, lifeless or futile. Steele on the other hand, writing about how Thornhill's painted ceiling affected his emotions, consciously omitted the adjective thereby leaving us with a quotation that translates as 'He feasts his soul on the picture'. The context of Aeneas looking at the temple frieze where past glories were illustrated very much fits in with the idea of Thornhill's ceiling which was to elevate patriotic feeling and celebrate past glories. By leaving out 'inani' we are treated less to a melancholy hankering after the past than to a positive and uplifting celebration of past, present and, it is implied, future, British glories.

⁶¹ On Catholic and Protestant taste and British art see Haynes C., *Pictures and Popery: Art and Religion in England, 1660–1760* (Aldershot: 2006).

⁶² The passage is also discussed by Laird A., "Ut figura poesis", in Elsner J. (ed.), *Art and Text in Roman Culture* (Cambridge: 1996) 87–94. Steele had previously suggested that the school of British art be based on portraiture and not history painting: Haynes, *Pictures and Popery* 4–5.

⁶³ Addison Joseph, *The Spectator* (London: 1711) Tuesday June 5th, no. 83; Paulson, *Hogarth* fig. 82.

Whilst here we see two leading intellectuals of the day apparently disagreeing on the powerful effects of (state) art, there was a wider debate regarding the taste of the nobility. As we have seen, to an extent the Protestant interpretation of the Counter Reformation aesthetic was translated in British secular art in order to glorify kings and uphold their divine status in public spaces, the two greatest examples being the Banqueting House – executed by the Catholic Rubens – and almost a century later Thornhill's glorification of the Protestant monarchs William and Mary. In the interim large-scale architectural painting had been employed by numerous nobles to advertise their own status in their seats. But, far from being seen as promoting a sublime style, there were many who deemed such art as crass and purely decorative, and whose criticism undoubtedly contributed to the phasing out of ceiling commissions soon after Thornhill's work at Greenwich.⁶⁴ Alexander Pope's *An Epistle to Lord Burlington* (1731) mocks the expense paid by various nobles on their country piles, including art, architecture and landscape gardening, and whose oft-quoted words, 'On painted Cielings you devoutly stare, Where sprawl the saints of Verrio or Laguerre, On gilded Clouds in fair expansion Lie, and bring all Paradise before your eye', appear to poke fun at private chapel decoration as presenting a fantastical, sanitised and frivolous version of religion.⁶⁵

We have already witnessed the scornful reaction of some to the effusive description by Robert Whitehall of the Sheldonian Theatre ceiling, and thereafter there was a continuing suspicion amongst British commentators that large-scale artworks were pompous in their effects, in criticism reminiscent of Longinus's description of bombast and the false sublime. There was an increasing sense from its critics that the art displayed in aristocratic houses was no longer adequate in terms of its effects and that only nature could have the strength to move us in that most fundamental, sublime sense. The inadequacy of artifice becomes Pope's main satirical target: 'Greatness, with *Timon*, dwells in such a Draught / As Brings all Brobdignag before your Thought; / To compass this, his Building is a Town, / His pond an Ocean, his parterre a Down'.⁶⁶ This sentiment is continually

⁶⁴ This was not necessarily mirrored elsewhere in Europe. In the middle of the eighteenth century Tiepolo executed what is often seen as the pinnacle of the genre in the Treppenhaus of the Residenz at Würzburg which, incidentally, it has been argued by Mark Ashton, includes the figure of Longinus. Ashton M., "Allegory, Fact, and Meaning in Giam-battista Tiepolo's Four Continents in Würzburg", *The Art Bulletin*, 60 (1978) 116–18.

⁶⁵ Pope Alexander, *An Epistle to the Right Honourable Richard Earl of Burlington* (London: 1731) 11–12.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

echoed thereafter, as emphasised in the famous anecdote from Dr Johnson on Chatsworth fountain that, 'I am of my friend's opinion, that when one had seen the ocean, cascades are but little things'.⁶⁷ These comments are reminiscent of Longinus himself: 'The Impulse of Nature inclines us to admire, not a little clear transparent Rivulet that ministers to our Necessities, but the Nile . . . or still much more, the Ocean'.⁶⁸ This helps to contextualise the development of a sublime aesthetic relating to the natural object that developed later in the century, but it also reveals something implicit about existing practice: that monarchs and nobles were at least attempting to attain a sublime effect through art and architecture.

William Smith's On the Sublime (1739)

The Reverend William Smith's 1739 translation of Longinus is helpful for understanding the connection of a visual sublime with Christian morality by Richardson as well as the more general prevailing contemporaneous practice of the appropriation of the sublime by the British. Whereas John Hall's 1652 translation had extolled the powers of good governance and the employment of effective rhetoric during the Commonwealth, Smith's translation almost a century later reflected the changes since the Glorious Revolution and developments since the birth of Great Britain in 1707, as summarised by Vaughan: 'based on a Protestant culture, which was seen as providing the basis for free enquiry and commercial success . . . set against what was seen as the forces of conservatism and repression, embodied by continental Catholic cultures, in particular that of France'.⁶⁹ In his notes, Smith cited the brave words of William of Orange to the Duke of Buckingham in fighting the French as an example of sublime rhetoric ('Not live to see its Ruin, but die in the last Dike'), to illustrate how sparse but carefully worded responses could wield far more power than rambling discourse.⁷⁰ Whereas the Reverend Zachary Pearce in his 1724 Greek and Latin translation of Longinus had given the ancient Greek example of Iphicrates to Aristophon, Smith, in his English translation, related the text to contemporary politics and offered up the example of the Protestant monarch to take on the mantle of the ancients. In his preface and notes, he connected the

⁶⁷ Johnson Samuel, *Letters*, I, 69.

⁶⁸ Longinus (1739) XXXV, 85.

⁶⁹ Vaughan, *British Painting* 11.

⁷⁰ Smith in Longinus (1739) 121.

political circumstances of Longinus's treatise with contemporaneous British politics, stressing the importance of liberty and patronage for allowing the sublime to flourish and thereby promoting his anti-slavery stance and also putting the onus of good governance on the latest in the line of Protestant monarchs during whose reign he was writing, George II.⁷¹

Smith plays up the link of Longinus to early Christianity in an effort to connect his treatise on the sublime with current religious issues, using Longinus's knowledge of *Fiat Lux* as justification. In his notes he picks examples with which to illustrate Longinus's points from the New Testament – for example the Raising of Lazarus – or the psalms.⁷² He stresses that it was God that Longinus urged people to aim for through their actions, ergo promoting Christian morality as a means to attaining the sublime.⁷³ Most significantly Smith insisted on paralleling Longinus with St Paul, adopted as a patron by the British, often viewed as the counterpoint to St Peter in Rome and similarly at the heart of their capital's identity through the art and architecture of the new cathedral.⁷⁴ In his preface, Smith directly associates Longinus with St Paul, claiming not only that the ancient writer would have approved of the latter's rhetorical capabilities in theory but also that he may actually have known his writings.⁷⁵ By highlighting the fact that both spent time in Athens where they employed the power of the word to great effect – Longinus publishing his treatise on sublime rhetoric there and Paul preaching to the local population – Smith explicitly connects the British patron saint with a classical literary heavyweight. In 1711 Alexander Pope wrote of the classical author, 'Thee, bold Longinus! all the Nine [Muses] inspire, / And bless their critic with a poet's fire. / An ardent judge, who zealous in his trust, / With warmth gives sentence, yet is always just; / Whose own example strengthens all his laws, / And is himself that great sublime he draws'.⁷⁶ This idea of a 'sublime character', which relied on a commanding presence and rousing rhetoric, was also extended to St Paul during this time.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Smith in Longinus (1739) xvii, 185–6; Monk, *The Sublime* 27.

⁷² Smith in Longinus (1739) 127–31.

⁷³ On morality and sublimity see also Turnbull George, *A Treatise on Ancient Painting* (London: 1740) 84.

⁷⁴ Johns R., *James Thornhill and Decorative History Painting in England After 1688*, PhD thesis (York: 2005) 77. See also Defoe, *A Tour* Letter II, 122–27.

⁷⁵ Smith in Longinus (1739) vi, xxiii–xxv.

⁷⁶ Pope Alexander, *An Essay on Criticism* (London: 1711) lines 675–80.

⁷⁷ On the contemporary view of St Paul see especially Johns, *James Thornhill* chap. 2, 74–113.

In Louis Chéron's frontispiece to Pearce's 1724 translation of Longinus, the author is depicted lecturing to the Athenians indoors whilst gesturing to the heavens. However in John Wall's frontispiece to William Smith's 1739 translation, engraved by Gerard Van der Gucht, a similar figure is shown outdoors, in the canonical tradition of depictions of St Paul preaching to the Athenians from Raphael's Acts of the Apostles cartoons on [Fig. 8].⁷⁸ There is no explicit indication as to whether the figure represented is St Paul or Longinus; although the use of Pope's above-quoted lines as an epigraph suggests the latter.⁷⁹ If it is Longinus, but illustrated in the canonical way of St Paul, this suggests a very deliberate merging of the two, helping us to realise how they were accepted as such by the eighteenth-century reader and viewer, and the extent to which the Christianising of Longinus, and the sublime, was in fashion. Longinus / St Paul became the figurehead of the new English translation, suggesting the former as the mouthpiece of the latter and vice versa, figures through which the importance of powerful, and morally persuasive, rhetoric could be impressed upon the British public.

Protestant Patriotism and the Decoration of St Paul's

The reigns of William of Orange and Queen Anne saw major rebuilding programmes, including many new churches as well as public art commissions, such as the Painted Hall at Greenwich which glorified William and Mary in a colourful and dynamic way. As discussed above, the artistic language and composition adopted at Greenwich was chosen to persuade the viewer of the need to believe in and support the Protestant Succession, and went hand-in-hand with the rhetorical literature of the time, such as John Dennis's patriotic poem about Queen Anne: 'And thou, Great Queen, the Glory of thy Sex,/ The Prop and Glory of the Noblest Isle;/ On whom ev'n *William* looks admiring down,/ And owns thee a Successor worthy him;/ On whom the gazing World looks wond'ring up,/ And its Deliverance waits from Heav'n and thee, / Whose matchless Piety and watchful Care,/ Shews al the wond'ring World that thou are sent/ From the bright

⁷⁸ On John Wall (1708–83) see Williamson G.C. (ed.), *Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers*, 5 Vols., vol. V (London: 1905) 330–1.

⁷⁹ Arline Meyer labels the figure St Paul because of the canonical representation of him against the temple. Meyer A., *Apostles in England, Sir James Thornhill & the legacy of Raphael's Tapestry Cartoons* (New York: 1996) 72–7, espec. 75, fig. 75.



Fig. 8. Gerard Van der Gucht, after John Wall, *Longinus lecturing to a group of Athenians*, engraved frontispiece to *Dionysius Longinus On the Sublime* (London, J. Watts: 1739). Image © Lydia Hamlett.

Church Triumphant in the Sky/ To make the warring Church Triumph below...'.⁸⁰ We have also seen how, just because decorative-history painting was not well received by some intellectuals of the day, does not necessarily mean that at that time it was seen as impotent or reactionary. Calls for public history painting in the early 1700s became a political matter and some called for more Painted Halls, and James Ralph, writing in the *Weekly Register*, even blamed the lack of them on Protestantism. Others such as Addison, however, remained wary of Roman Catholicism and Roman Catholic artists, including Raphael. He was anyway a non-believer in the power of visual art, putting his trust more in the power of (God's) natural world, which was to become central to the sublime aesthetic later in the eighteenth century.

Nonetheless decorative-history painting was judged in the context of the houses commissioned by rich nobles and largely fashioned by foreign (and frequently Catholic) artists and, increasingly, the state looked to diminish such influences. Besides the frontispiece illustration to Smith's 1739 edition of Longinus, there was a more prominent instance of the influence of Raphael's tapestry cartoons of the Acts of the Apostles: Thornhill's own treatment of *St Paul Preaching* in the dome of St Paul's. This shows the crowd visibly and physically affected by the saint's rhetoric and its stark chiaroscuro monochrome is quite different from Raphael's own colourful, yet soft, palette [Fig. 9].⁸¹ Raphael's cartoons were held up by British critics including Richardson to be the most sublime examples of art. The series and, in particular, *St Paul Preaching* (itself declared an example of the visual sublime by Steele and Richardson) was well known. The cartoons were kept in the Banqueting Hall for over a century and displayed under William III at Hampton Court, with copies owned by nobles across the country, and were made accessible to a wider public through numerous engravings.⁸² Commentators including Steele and Turnbull praised the capacity of the cartoons to elevate the thoughts of the spectator morally, much as portraiture was believed to be able to do.⁸³

The power of the picture was once again being acknowledged in Britain as strong, if not stronger, than the word: but perhaps it was only at

⁸⁰ Dennis John, *Britannia Triumphans: or The Empire Sav'd, and Europe Delivered* (London: 1704) 6.

⁸¹ On Thornhill and Raphael see Meyer, *Apostles in England*; Haynes, *Pictures and Popery* 46–73.

⁸² Haynes, *Pictures and Popery* 48–9.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 50–1.



Fig. 9. Sir James Thornhill, *St Paul Preaching at Athens*, c. 1720, oil on canvas, 762 × 508 mm, sketch for the dome of St Paul's cathedral, on loan to the Tate Collection. Image © Tate, by kind permission of the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral.

St Paul's that Protestants found a justifiable type of decorative-history painting to rival the grand-scale Catholic baroque visions. Those such as Jonathan Richardson and Richard Steele enlisted the ancient notion of sublimity and the authority of Longinus himself as advocates of a new, Protestant, visual sublime. At St Paul's, Thornhill, answering the calls for native history-painters from commentators since William Aglionby (1685), beat off competition for the commission from foreign competitors such as the Jesuit-educated Louis Laguerre, whose own plans for the ceiling had to be aborted.⁸⁴ The shift during this period in notions of what was visually effective can be seen both in theory and in art practice and the aesthetic choices for the commission at St Paul's, besides the importance of employing a native Protestant artist, must be seen in this context.⁸⁵

Perhaps what we can most usefully draw from Jonathan Richardson is how he outlines the shift in discourse regarding the meaning of a visual sublime, which can be demonstrated by a taste for a more 'Baroque' sublime in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (admiration for the figures of Michelangelo as agents of human emotion in the Cappella Paolina, and the infinite abundance depicted in Zuccaro's Annunciation fresco) to a more Protestant visual sublime based on simplicity of colour and technique and embodying moral ideas, for which his and others' admiration of Raphael is emblematic. The taste for a sparser visual sublime is epitomised by Richardson's choice as an example of the sublime in painting of a sketch by Rembrandt:

... in *Clair-Obscure* only, that the most Eloquent Preacher cannot paint it so strongly by the most Elaborate Discourse; I do not pretend to Describe it, it must be Seen ... 'tis in a Little sort of an Alcove, Dark Otherwise, though 'tis Bright Day in the next Room, and which is nearest the Eye, There the Son of this Dying Old Man is at Prayers. O God! What is this World! Life passes away like a Tale that is Old ... the Utmost Excellency that I think I ever saw, or can conceive is possible to be Imagined ... all this with the Utmost Art, and with the greatest Simplicity; That being more Apt, at least in this Case, than any Embellishment whatsoever.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Aglionby William, *Painting Illustrated in Three Dialogues* (London 1685) xv-xvi, 98-9. On the commission see Meyer, *Apostles in England* 69-72; Gibson-Wood C., "The Political Background to Thornhill's Painting in St Paul's Cathedral", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 56 (1993) 229-37; Johns R., "'An Air of Grandeur and Modesty': James Thornhill's Painting in the Dome of St. Paul's Cathedral", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 42 (2009) 501-27.

⁸⁵ See, for example, Paulson, *Hogarth* vol. I, 124-131.

⁸⁶ Richardson (1725), *Essay* 252-53; Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson* 177-78.

The sketch is profound in its subject, illustrating the last moments of a dying man and the anguish of his son. In its central idea, then, it is sublime. But it is the chiaroscuro of the composition that seemingly plays the most affective role, capturing the indefinable transition between life and death. The explanation, that a lack of embellishment can lead to the sublime, is of course reminiscent of Longinus, but Richardson also casts it in a Protestant context: the scene is infused with humble simplicity, more effective than even the most 'Eloquent Preacher' could describe, and emphasising the sublimity of domestic prayer. Later, in his 1739 translation of Longinus, William Smith was to give the example of a sermon by Archbishop Tillotson as an example of how, through being moral, we can excel; and, as we have seen, the frontispiece to Smith appears to parallel a preaching St Paul with Longinus.⁸⁷ Most important of all, Richardson emphasises that it is the way in which the idea is conveyed that has a profound effect on the mind of the viewer, which is, after all, the true test of the sublime.

The commission for painting the interior of the dome of St Paul's cathedral by James Thornhill should be considered in this context [Fig. 10]. It demonstrates the simple yet effective sublime that Richardson describes, and was executed only a few years before his friend's essay was published.⁸⁸ In contrast to the Painted Hall at Greenwich, the painted dome relies on light as its central effect. Its impact lies in the stark simplicity of its monochrome chiaroscuro rather than on the abundance of form or colour. In each of the eight scenes that illustrate the life of the cathedral's patron saint the light comes from the top left, casting shadows in the arches by which each is framed and on the urns which decorate the base of each pier. In place of a central apotheosis or assembly of heavenly creatures, our eyes are raised upwards into the oculus of an illusionistic coffered vault and then into the skylight at the very top, streaming with natural light from its windows. In stark contrast to those ceilings that ask 'when do we most resemble the (pagan) gods?', it appears rather more to answer, in the mould of Smith's interpretation of Longinus, 'when do we most resemble (the Christian) God?', as it shows the earthly acts of St Paul.

⁸⁷ Smith in Longinus (1739) 142.

⁸⁸ Johns, *James Thornhill* 80–9.



Fig. 10. Sir James Thornhill, *Scenes from the life of St Paul*, c. 1721, interior of the dome of St Paul's cathedral. Image © Dean and Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral.

Conclusion

Richardson's crowning of Michelangelo and, later, Raphael as the quintessentially sublime artist, hints at a shift in taste between 'baroque' effusiveness and 'neo-classical' simplicity between the years of publication of the two editions of his essay, 1715 and 1725. The work of Michelangelo was known and admired through his frescos in the Sistine Ceiling and other works of emotional and religious intensity, including the Cappella Paolina which Richardson discusses; but the growing popularity in Britain of Raphael seems to epitomise the moral sublimity increasingly favoured by leading British Protestants. The additional example given by Richardson

of Zuccaro alongside Rembrandt in 1725 suggest that some vestiges of the baroque sublime of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries still lingered on in Richardson's theories of the visual sublime. It shows Richardson at the end of an era dominated by the theories of Longinus and not just at the beginning of a more familiar eighteenth-century discourse on the sublime.

Later, Richardson's and others' empirical ways of judging the sublime in art appeared inconsequential: however much they had tried to define the sublime, there was always something out of their grasp, unquantifiable because, ultimately, affect is subjective. Gibson Wood summarises, 'the reader [is left] in some doubt as to whether sublimity is a degree of excellence, or the capacity to evoke a distinctive response'.⁸⁹ History painting itself was defined by Shaftesbury in neo-classical terms in his *Tablature of Hercules* (1714), in which he dismissed decorative-history painting as alien, those 'wilder sorts' of painting. Pope's *Peri bathous* (1727) satirised attempts by modern authors at attaining sublimity in their poetry and, as we have seen, the same kind of the same criticism began to be levelled at history painters and the patrons who commissioned them to adorn their houses. By the end of the eighteenth century the sublime had anyway been redefined in aesthetic terms following the publication of Burke's *Philosophical Inquiry* in 1757. The ability of increasing numbers of men to travel to places of sublime natural scenery, as well as ancient archaeological sites, transformed notions of the effects and affects of art and architecture back home. The admiration of the moral idea which had, near to the start of the century, replaced an increasingly ridiculed 'baroque' sublime was itself overtaken by an admiration for the Burkean sublime. Monk describes consummately how a fondness for Raphael and the New Testament in the first half of the century was replaced with one for Michelangelo and the Old Testament in the second half, and how this reflected a renewed keenness for drama, passion and terror.⁹⁰

What is not examined by Monk is why Richardson chose Michelangelo as the epitome of a sublime artist in 1715. An examination of the means of persuasive composition, understood in terms of the Longinian sublime, can help to understand why. All of Richardson's examples of the sublime in art demonstrate the strong connection between artistic composition and sublimity that had defined the discourse up until that point. Rather

⁸⁹ Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson* 188.

⁹⁰ Monk, *The Sublime*.

than betraying a shallow understanding of the sublime, soon to be overshadowed by a definition based on our relationship with the natural object and the idea that representation was inadequate for communicating the complexity of this experience, Richardson's writings and case studies reveal the impact of the classical tradition on ideas about art and sublimity. Much of what Richardson viewed as sublime in art – its ability to uplift, the majesty of simplicity and the persuasive power of personality – can be recognised in Longinus's essay on rhetoric, which clearly shaped the contemporaneous understanding of notions of the sublime, and also goes some way to explaining the seventeenth and early eighteenth-century experience of visual art.

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FIGURING THE SUBLIME IN ENGLISH CHURCH ARCHITECTURE 1640–1730

Caroline van Eck

The architects of the Anglican churches built after the Civil War took great pains to avoid any suggestion of idolatry, both as a reaction against the excesses of High Anglicanism in the uses of art in church ritual under the rule of Charles I, who was accused of being a crypto-Catholic, and as a way of preventing new waves of iconoclasm. This raised another problem: how to avoid that these new churches would lack religious dignity and would simply become barns for the congregation, as the extremist wing of Puritans had wanted them to be during the Civil War? How to choose between what Sir Christopher Wren called ‘an Auditory’ on the one hand, and the larger churches built ‘for the *Romanists*, [for whom] it is enough if they hear the Murmur of the Mass’?¹ How, in other words, could an Anglican architect, working after the idolatry of the Stuart Kings before the Civil War, and the iconoclasm and destruction of churches that occurred during Puritan rule, design churches that would comply with the rejection of images but at the same time convey the divine presence? How, that is, create a building that would possess religious efficacy without falling in the traps of idolatry or the danger of iconoclasm?

The sublime and awful appearance of churches

English architects may not have produced any treatises comparable to those of Alberti, Serlio or Palladio in the period before 1715, but they, their patrons and the general public, did write a great deal about one particular issue: the design of Anglican churches.² Both the Anglican hierarchy

¹ Sir Christopher Wren, “Letter on Building Churches” (1711), reprinted in Soo L. (ed.), *Wren’s “Tracts” on Architecture and Other Writings* (Cambridge – New York: 1998) 115.

² See Eck C. van (ed.), *British Architectural Theory 1540–1750: An anthology of texts* (Aldershot: 2003), in particular Part III, where some of the texts mentioned here, including *De Templis*, the memoranda by Vanbrugh and Wren, and the minutes of the Commission overseeing the building of fifty City churches are reprinted.

and the Stuart rulers, who were also head of the church, were anxious to develop a formal vocabulary that would break away with Mediaeval traditions, but not too much, because they were reluctant to part from the English tradition, and claimed the Anglican church was in fact much more faithful to original Christianity than the Church of Rome. At the same time Anglican churches should not look too much like contemporary church design in Italy or France, for obvious reasons. As a result much was written on this issue, not in the least to legitimize stylistic and liturgical choices. All the very extensive minutes of the meetings of the Commission overseeing the building of Fifty new city churches, installed in 1711, survive for instance, but already in 1638 a very detailed, anonymous treatise *De Templis*, on church architecture, was published and widely read. Much of the discussions by the Commission limited themselves studiously to practical details, but a few statements about the religious character of these buildings stand out. In church design, Sir John Vanburgh, one of the architects involved in the 1711 campaign, advised, 'the necessary dispositions in the usefull part of the Fabrick, shou'd be made consistent with the utmost Grace that Architecture can produce, for the Beauty of it.' Pediments were the only ornament allowed by the Committee. Charles Wheatly's *A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England*,³ published in 1710 and the most widely used manual on liturgy and the furnishing of churches, admitted that the early Christian churches at Tyre and Constantinople were 'incomparably sumptuous and magnificent', and allowed the use of expensive materials, columns and pediments, but plainly stated that 'No *Images* were worship'd'; quoting Origen on idolatry, he added that

the Images, that were to be dedicated to God, were not to be carv'd by the hands of artists, but to be form'd and fashion'd in us by the word of God; viz. the virtues of justice and temperance, of wisdom and piety, &c. that conform us to the image of his only Son. "These (says he) are the only statues form'd in our minds; and by which alone we are persuaded 'tis fit to do honour to him, who is the *Image of the invisible God*, the prototype and archetypal pattern of all such images.

The churches should not have too many windows but be suitably dark, because as Vanbrugh put it, windows

³ Wheatly C., *A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England* (London: 1710) § 4.

likewise take off very much, both from the Appearance & reality of strength in the Fabrick; giving it more the Air of a Gay Lanthorn to be set on the Top of a Temple, than the Reverend look of a Temple it self [...]

And finally breaking with this tendency only to tell architects what not to do, Vanbrugh added: '[a temple] shou'd ever have the most Solemn and Awfull Appearance both without and within, that is possible'.

The churches built in the decades around 1700 complied with this careful brand of Anglicanism: they lack statues and pictures, as the interiors of Wren's City (Fig. 1) churches show, conspicuous by their absence of any pictorial representation of the main doctrines of Christianity; the city churches by Hawksmoor look solemn and awful indeed, with their overbearing rustication and abstract ornament without any clear Christian reference (Fig. 2); their Michelangeloesque play with the laws of tectonics (Fig. 3), and their use of Hellenistic Baroque elements to articulate and decorate the interior, as shown by the use of ressauts in the interior of Christ Church (Fig. 4).

As I have argued elsewhere, the principles underlying these designs, with their abruptness, lack of gradual change, oversizing of subordinate elements and upsetting of the viewers's expectations are very similar to the principles of composition outlined by Longinus in his treatise on the sublime, a work that had been edited and translated into English at least four times before the 1690s, and which was present in many of the libraries of the architects and patrons involved in building the City churches.⁴ To give but one example: Longinus defined composition as the union of conflicting or contradictory elements. Here is his analysis of a description of Odysseus' shipwreck in the *Iliad*.

Moreover, by forcing into an abnormal union prepositions not usually compounded he [Homer] has tortured his language into conformity with the impending disaster, magnificently figured the disaster by the compression of his language, and almost stamped on the diction the precise form of the danger. [...] What they [Homer, Sappho and Demosthenes] have done is to clean up, as it were, the very best of the main points, and to fit them together, allowing nothing affected or undignified or pedantic to intervene. These things ruin the whole, by introducing, as it were, gaps and crevices into masses which are built together, walled in by their mutual relationships.⁵

⁴ Eck C. van, "Longinus' Essay on the Sublime and the 'Most Solemn and Awfull Appearance' of Hawksmoor's Churches", *Georgian Group Journal* 15 (2006) 1–6.

⁵ Longinus, *On the Sublime*, translated by W.H. Fyfe, revised by D. Russell (Cambridge (Mass.) – London: 1995) X, 203–5.



Fig. 1. Sir Christopher Wren, St Stephen Walbrook, London 1672–80, interior. The altar is a 20th-century addition.



Fig. 2. Nicholas Hawksmoor, St Mary Woolnoth, London 1716–27.



Fig. 3. Nicholas Hawksmoor, St George Bloomsbury, London 1716–31, North side. Photograph: Sophie Ploeg.



Fig. 4. Nicholas Hawksmoor, Christ Church Spitalfields, London, 1714–27, interior. Photograph: author.

This immediately recalls the abrupt transitions and ‘conflicting unions’ of Hawksmoor’s St Alphege (Fig. 5), the abrupt articulation of the spire of Christ Church (Fig. 6) or the careful ordering of discontinuous façades in St Anne Limehouse (Fig. 7).

These English translations also introduced a new aesthetic concept: the sublime. Before the English translations of Longinus the sublime aesthetic was not part of the English architectural vocabulary. Vanbrugh’s plea for solemn and awful appearances in church design may be heir to a tradition of appreciating Gothic for its sombre, imposing grandeur, but it had not been used in the context of classical church design before Longinus was reintroduced into Britain. His treatise inspired an aesthetic unlike that of Alberti or Palladio, who had stressed harmony, simplicity, clarity and perspicuity. Longinus, and in his wake Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor, appreciated the intricate, the difficult, the dark and the awful. Architecture, as Sir Christopher Wren would put it, ‘aims at eternity’.⁶ It should impress the beholder and inspire awe.

The poetics of the sublime and the politics of representation

This English interest in the sublime was not simply a matter of following the French fashion for the sublime, to which Boileau’s version of 1674 had contributed so much, because editions and translations had begun to appear on English soil at least as early as 1638. Instead, I would suggest, the interest in a sublime aesthetics of religious architecture was very much formed in two intellectual, religious and political constellations, in which the sublime played a central role: in the political culture of the Civil War and Cromwell’s rule; and in the search for an architectural language to figure the divine and host worship that would be primitive both in the sense of reflecting the practices of the earliest Christians, and in the sense that it would approach the original, divinely inspired language God had given to mankind and which was lost when the Tower of Babel was built, to which I will return in section four of this essay.

Two issues were conspicuous in public debate during this period: High Anglican idolatry versus Puritan iconoclasm, and political leadership, more in particular the character of Cromwell’s rule and the trial and

⁶ Sir Christopher Wren, “Tract I”, in Soo L. (ed.), *Wren’s “Tracts” on Architecture and Other Writings* (Cambridge – New York: 1998) 153.



Fig. 5. Nicholas Hawksmoor, St Alphege Greenwich, 1712–18. Photograph: Wikipedia Commons.



Fig. 6. Nicholas Hawksmoor, Christ Church Spitalfields, London 1714–27, exterior.
Photograph: Steve Cadman.



Fig. 7. Nicholas Hawksmoor, St Anne Limehouse, London 1714–25. Photograph: Steve Cadman.

execution of Charles I. Both issues were often discussed in sublime terms, by royalists and supporters of Parliament or Cromwell alike, as David Norbrook has recently shown.⁷

An anonymous treatise called ‘Chaos’, published in 1659, for instance gave the foundation of a republic a Longinian sublimity, even alluding to the famous ‘Let there be light’ passage from *Genesis* that Longinus had so famously quoted:

As Light was the first thing in the Creation, and so properly called the work of the first day; so for her first days work [the republic] propounds for the Balancing of Interests, and reducing each piece to its proper place [...] so if any one piece seem to be wrested out of place, the weight and frame of the whole prevents it.⁸

Here we find the same view of a whole, whether it be a building or a compound sentence as a kind of precarious balancing act between conflicting

⁷ Norbrook D., *Writing the English Republic* (Cambridge – New York: 1999).

⁸ An., *Chaos* (1659) 2–4, quoted by Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic* 400.

parts as in Longinus' passage on the conflicting unity in Homer quoted above. In Milton's *Paradise Lost* the war in heaven waged between the forces of Satan and the heavenly hosts is first compared to the battles fought at the end of the Roman Republic, and thereby the dissolution of the republic is associated with the dissolution of the entire cosmos.

[...] two broad suns their shields
 Blazed opposite [...] from each hand with speed retired
 where erst was thickest fight, the angelic throng,
 And left large fields, unsafe within the wind
 Of such commotion, such as to set forth
 Great things by small, if nature's concord broke,
 Among the constellations war were sprung,
 Two planets rushing from aspect malign
 Of fiercest opposition in mid sky,
 Should combat, and their jarring spheres confound. (PL VI. 305–15)

Marchamont Nedham, another supporter of Parliament, pleaded for a symbolic reordering of time and place, proposing that books were no longer dated from the Christian year, but from the first year of liberty, as would be done in France in 1789 – about as sublime a gesture as you can make. He did so in 1650, the same year in which the statues of King James I and Charles I were to be thrown down from the new west end portico of St Paul's Cathedral (Fig. 8). Thomas Cromwell, the leader of the Commonwealth, was also described in terms that come very close to the Longinian sublime. In the *First Anniversary Ode* by Andrew Marvell Cromwell is compared to the sun, a simile traditionally reserved for kings:

Cromwell alone with greater Vigour runs,
 (Sun-like) the stages of succeeding Suns:
 And still the Day which he doth next restore
 Is the just Wonder of the Day before (7–10)

In such passages a system of metaphors and similes is constructed, which present Cromwell as the sublime architect of a new state; in a transformation of the traditional metaphor of the cornerstone for royal upholders of divine order, he becomes the dynamic mover and shaker of a new order. His fall from a horse is transformed into an event overturning the natural course of things:

Thou, Cromwell, falling, not a stupid tree,
 Or rock so savage, but it mourned for thee:
 And all about was heard a panic groan,
 As if that Nature's self was overthrown.
 It seemed the earth did from the centre tear;
 It seemed the sun was fall'n out of the sphere (202–6)

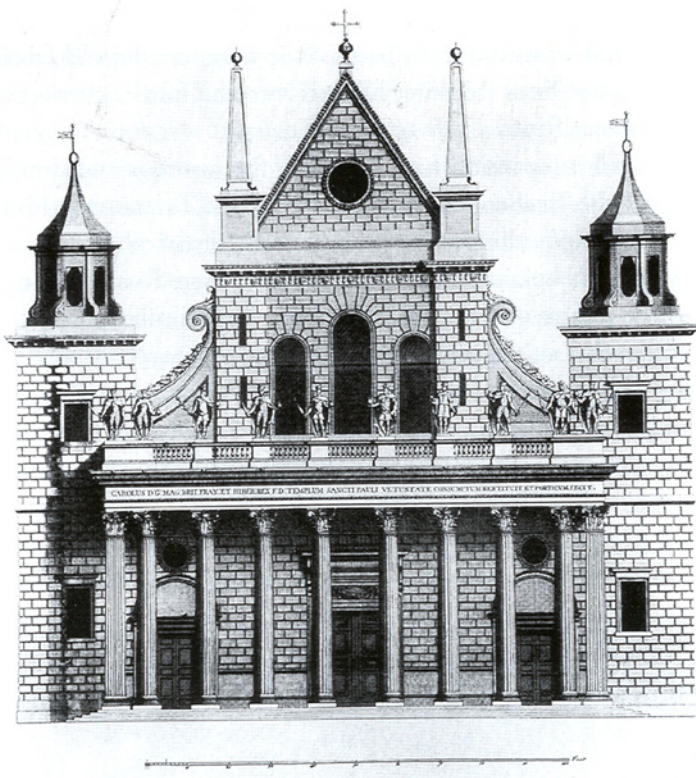


Fig. 8. Inigo Jones, St Paul's Cathedral. West front, 1634–42.

And in an anonymous poem on Cromwell's death the ultimate sublime topos is used: that of sublime unrepresentability

Th'earth ne're was seen at once, nor can a minde
Larger then that, & more unconfinde⁹

But it was not just founding the republic, or the character of its Protector, that was represented in terms of sublimity; even the execution of King Charles was described as the height of the sublime. In Marvell's *First Anniversary Ode* Cromwell is first presented as a new Amphion, where Charles had often been called a 'normal' Amphion, for instance in Edmund Waller's poem praising his restoration of St Paul's Cathedral of 1631:

⁹ Quoted by Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic* 387.

So when Amphion did the lute comand,
Which the god gave him, with his gentle hand,
The rougher stones, unto his measures hewed,
danced up in order from the quarries rude;
This took a lower, that an higher place,
As he the treble altered, or the bass (51–56)

In the *Horatian Ode*, also devoted to Cromwell, the latter is compared first to a cunning merciless hunter of royal prey; next the execution of the King is presented as a sublime moment of theatricality, presenting in one scene both the death of Cromwell's quarry and the unpitying exultation of the onlookers:

... twining subtle fears with hope,
He wove a net of such scope,
That Charles himself might chase
To Carisbrook's narrow case:
That thence the royal actor born
The tragic scaffold might adorn:
While round the armèd bands
Did clap their bloody hands. (50–56)

John Hall (1626–56), a Cambridge-educated pamphlet writer for Cromwell who was the first English translator of Longinus,¹⁰ also saw the execution of Charles as a sublime act. It allowed for a restored sense of vision that before had been dazzled by the false splendour of royalty, and by upsetting what seemed divine right, restored the natural order in one act of sublime violence. John Milton even compared, in a passage full of echoes from Longinus' description of composition quoted above, writing an epic with killing a king:

[...] just as the epic poet, if he is scrupulous and disinclined to break the rules, undertakes to extol, not the whole life of the hero whom he proposes to celebrate in his verse, but usually one event of his life... so let it suffice me too, as my duty or my excuse, to have celebrated at least one heroic achievement of my countrymen (*Areopagitica* 685).

To describe the political and religious convulsions authors often used architectural metaphors. The royalist poet Edmund Waller had described Charles' building activities for Saint Paul's, commissioning Inigo Jones to add a new portico clearly based on the Pantheon, to Amphion's

¹⁰ Hall John, *Peri hupsous, Or, Dionysius Longinus on the Height of Eloquence. Rendered out of the Originall by J.H.* (London, s.n.: 1652).

harmonious architecture. But in Lucan's *Pharsalia*, an epic about the wars between Caesar, Pompey and Marc Anthony that ended the Roman Republic, which was widely read and imitated during the 17th century, republican, primitive sublimity in architecture is contrasted with imperial monumentality. In Milton's *Paradise Lost* the archangel Raphael describes the cosmos; no longer as a mathematically ordered harmonious whole, supremely accessible to human rationality, but as a *concordia discors* that strains the boundaries of representation. Incidentally he also downplays any sense of monarchy as part of a divinely ordained natural order:

And for the heaven's wide circuit, let it speak
the maker's high magnificence, who built
So spacious, and his line stretched out so far;
That man may know he dwells not in his own;
An edifice too large for him to fill,
Lodged in a small partition, and the rest
Ordn'd for uses to his Lord best known.
The swiftness of those circles attribute,
Though numberless, to his omnipotence,
That to corporeal substances could add
Speed almost spiritual; me thou think'st not slow,
Who since the morning hour set out from heaven
Where God resides, and ere midday arrived
In Eden, distance inexpressible
By numbers that have name. (*Paradise Lost* VIII, 100–113)

In a complete reversal of the classical aesthetic favoring clarity, transparency and regularity, the architecture of the cosmos is now sublime because it is incomprehensible. But it is still described in architectural terms. Even the inner self has become sublimely unfathomable. In *Vox Pacifica* the Parlementarian poet George Wither put it thus:

(*looking inwardly*) I saw distentions
So boundlesse, in their *Width*, their *Depth*, and *Height*

They look like the depths of the ocean or mountain valleys:

A *Place* (if *Place* we call it may)
Within the Concave of whose wondrous *Orb*,
The Eye of *Contemplation* may survey
Sights, which no *Bounds*, or *Shaddows*, do disturb.¹¹

¹¹ *Vox Pacifica* p. 13, quoted in Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic* 143.

All these quotes are not amassed here to suggest that there is a direct line of influence from Marvell, Milton or Wither to Vanbrugh and Wren, not in the least because it would be difficult to explain why the royalist City commission and its architects would opt for such a Puritan and Parliamentary aesthetic. But the passages just quoted do illustrate the nature and the function of these, quite frequent, uses of the sublime to talk about politics, the cosmos, or the execution of kings. They show how widespread the rhetoric of the sublime, in the sense of a sublime style, had become by the 1650s in England. Even if England at that time hardly could boast its own theories of art or architecture, David Norbrook has made clear that the sublime provided a very powerful mode of thought, or one could even say architecture of metaphors, to discuss both actions, objects and works of art that in some manner broke generally accepted moulds. In that sense the sublime provided a poetics to represent the unrepresentable, and thereby a model for Restoration architects who had to convey some sense of the divine without being able to use figurative art.

Sir William Dugdale's History of Saint Paul's Cathedral

How the sublime could function within an architectonic context to figure what the mind cannot encompass may be illustrated by one of the first monographs devoted to one building, Sir William Dugdale's *History of Saint Paul's Cathedral in London, from its Foundation*, first published in 1658. Dugdale (1605–86) was a royalist and Garter Principal to the King, who from the early 1640s foresaw what would happen to England's churches if the Puritan iconoclasts got their way: 'the Profanation of all Places of God's Publick Worship, Destruction of Monuments in Churches, and Defacing whatsoever was beautiful and ornamental therein.'¹² God would be turned out of churches into barns, and from barns into the open fields. The book is therefore partly a legitimization of church building, drawing on the Bible and the Church Fathers, partly a visual record of the graves and inscriptions destroyed by the Puritans, partly a building history, and a documentation of titles, deeds and donations as well. It was illustrated by the Czech engraver Wenceslas Hollar, and draws implicitly on the sublime

¹² Dugdale William, *The History of Saint Paul's Cathedral in London, from its Foundation* (London, Maynard: 1716²) ix.

in very interesting ways.¹³ Thus Dugdale quotes a passage of sublime, in the Longinian sense, rhetoric by Bishop Hooker who announces the fury of the iconoclasts as an *Umwertung aller Werte*:

He hath by some Enchantment so deeply bewitch'd Religion itself, as to make it in the end an Earnest Solicitor and an eloquent Persuader of sacrilege, urging confidently that the very best service, which Rulers of Power can do to Christ, is without any more Ceremony, to sweep all, and to have the Church as bare, as in the Day it was first born.¹⁴

But the sublime resides above all in Hollar's etchings of the interior. These do not show all the statues, altars, votive gifts etc that would have adorned the interior until the 1640s, but vast empty spaces that are represented in such a way that the mind cannot really comprehend them: in the great etching of the nave for instance, the rows of pillars on the left and right are depicted not as parallel rows occupying the same space at both sides, but lopsided, under an angle, so that the row on the right seems to pull the eye of the viewer into a vast, dark, unfathomable space (Fig. 9). It brings to mind Kant's remark about the sublimity of Saint Peter's in Rome: the visitor underestimates its vastness; only once you have entered and start walking down the nave does its vastness begin to unfold itself. Hollar and Dugdale stress the sublime character of the nave in the captions to these etchings, where they call the church a stupendous basilica. In the etching of the depleted choir, they quote and paraphrase from Vergil's description of the sack of Troy in *Aeneid* I.399, and the profoundly wrenching effect this has on the mind (Fig. 10); and most intriguingly of all, in another interior view they quote Lucretius 'tantum potuit suadere religio' – such is the persuasive power of religion – but do not finish the quote – malorum: to do evil.

The sublime and the primitive

There was another context as well in which the sublime functioned as a way to figure the sacred in architecture: the *ambiente* of the Barberini at Palazzo Barberini in 17th-century Rome. The Barberini not only boasted

¹³ On the collaboration between Dugdale and Hollar see Roberts M., *Dugdale and Hollar. History Illustrated* (Newark – London: 2002); on the images and their captions see Pennington R., *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Wenceslaus Hollar* (Cambridge: 1982).

¹⁴ Dugdale, *The History of Saint Paul's Cathedral* 147.



Fig. 9. Wenceslas Hollar, Interior View of Old St Paul's London. Illustration for Sir Paul Dugdale, *History of Old St Paul's from its Foundation*, London 1658. Photo: private collection.

a pope – Urbanus VIII – and several cardinals, they were also collectors of classical and contemporary art, founded a library, hosted academies and sponsored scholars, in particular the historiography of the early Church and its buildings, which was still in its infancy at the time. One of these was Leone Allacci (1586–1669), a Greek Catholic polymath from Chios who arrived in Rome in 1564 to study, became librarian to Cardinal Francesco Barberini, subsequently with Cassiano dal Pozzo an art buyer for the Barberini collection of classical sculpture, and ended his career as Vatican librarian. In a pioneering article of 1989 about the role



Fig. 10. Wenceslas Hollar, View of Interior of Old Saint Paul's looking towards the East, from Sir Paul Dugdale, *History of Old St Paul's from its Foundation*, London 1658. Photograph: private collection.

of early Christian archaeology in Hawksmoor's church designs Pierre de la Ruffinière du Prey has shown that Allacci's books and letters about the seven wonders of the world and early Christian temples were a formative influence on the Anglican divines who inspired Hawksmoor's design of Anglican churches that would recall 'ye purest times of Christianity'.¹⁵ But what is less well known, is that Allacci also produced a translation of long passages from Longinus. These are part of a treatise on sacred oratory, *De erroribus magnorum virorum in dicendo*, published in Rome in 1635 and dedicated to the Apostolic protonotary Iohannes Slingeland.¹⁶

The book opens with a discussion of the original, unique language God gave man in Paradise, which lost its universality with the construction of the Tower of Babel to be replaced by the infinity of languages and dialects that now obstruct universal understanding among human beings. These languages are the images of inner speech, or rather, the *rationis imago*, the image of the original, divine word or ratio. In sublime eloquence, where the orator comes close to original language, there is very little distance between inner and outer speech, because there to conceive a thought and to utter it are fused. The highly figural language of sublime speech therefore comes closest to primitive speech.¹⁷

In a move that recalls Wheatly's rejection, quoted above, of tangible and visible works of art in favour of the inner image directly instilled in the heart of the believer by God, Allacci from the opening pages of his treatise places his discussion of sublime sacred oratory in the context of figuration, in the sense of giving outward shape to one's inner thoughts. It is through the highly charged sublime style Pindar for instance used, with its use of abrupt and dense metaphor that the orator can attract the minds of his audience, direct their will away or towards whatever he chooses.¹⁸ With his praise of the silent eloquence of heroic actions Allacci

¹⁵ De la Ruffinière du Prey P., "Hawksmoor's 'Basilica after the Primitive Christians': Architecture and Theology", *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 48 (1989) 38–52. See also his more recent study, *Hawksmoor's London Churches* (Chicago – London: 2000), which extends and further documents the argument of his earlier article by reconstructing in great detail the connections between Italian and English students of early Christian churches, Anglican discussions of church architecture and Hawksmoor's designs.

¹⁶ On Allacci see Fumaroli M., "Crépuscule de l'enthousiasme au XVII^e siècle", in *III^e Congrès International d'Etudes Néolatines (Tours 1976)* (Paris: 1980) XI, 1279–1305, idem, "Rhétorique d'école et rhétorique adulte: la réception européenne du *Traité du Sublime* au XVI^e et XVII^e siècles", *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 1 (1986) 36–51, and Nau C., *Le temps du sublime* (Rennes: 2005) 32 ff.

¹⁷ Allacci Leone, *De erroribus magnorum virorum in dicendo* (Rome, Mascardi: 1635) 11–12.

¹⁸ Allacci, *De erroribus magnorum virorum in dicendo* 23: 'quod diceret Pindarus *akron aoton* intelligamus, cuius ope Orator hominum caetus dicendo tenet, mentes allicit, volun-

opens the way to a sublime eloquence of the visual arts, where he had been preceded by the French rhetoric teacher Father de Cresolles, who had stressed the effectiveness of the *orator tacens* and eloquent silence in his *Vacationes Autumnales* of 1620, a widely read rhetoric handbook in which he as well had quoted large passages from Longinus. The examples Cresolles had given include silence as a strategy used by orators, but also the silent exempla of the martyrs and saints. Their actions and attitudes demonstrate God's word to the viewer.

At the same time, the sublime is linked to primitive speech, in the sense of the language God originally gave to mankind. Allacci published his book at the moment Urbanus VIII had started his campaign for christian *renovatio*, and both his investigations of early Christian church architecture and his treatise on oratory can be connected with the papal effort.¹⁹ They share a way of looking at Christian art, whether it be church architecture or oratory, which favours ways of expression that go very much against recent artistic developments: one of the problems that troubled 17th-century students of early Christian art was their lack of artistic or aesthetic appeal when measured against Renaissance standards. Allacci was closely involved with the antiquarian investigations of the Barberini circles, such as Cassiano dal Pozzo's project to list and describe all that remained of Roman antiquity in his *Museum Chartaceum*, which continued Raphael and Pirro Ligorio's antiquarian efforts, or the excavations of primitive Christian remains as published by Antonio Bosio in *Roma sotteranea* in 1632, which resulted in an inventory of all iconographical and epigraphical traces of early Christianity.

Clélia Nau has argued that this archaeological project, this dream of reconstructing the ruins of pagan and early Christian Rome, closely resembles Longinus' desire to preserve the fragments he knew of Homer or Sappho and restore if not their works into their pristine grandeur, than at least their sublimity of style.

tates impellit, quo velit, unde autem velit, deducit'. The passage shows a striking similarity to a passage in Lione Pascoli's 'Vita di Andrea Pozzo', in his *Vite de' Pittori Scultori ed Architetti Moderni* (Rome, s.n.: 1736) 192: 'Piu prodigiosa però di tutti mi pare la prospettiva, la quale ingannando a suo piacere la vista ci tira a vedere qual che non è, e fa cadere su' nostri sensi cioche poscia veduto, o da piu vicino, o da piu diverso punto non trova'. And cf. Pascoli's remark on rhetoric: 'All'energia dell'eloquenza che si gloria di trarre il cuore dell'uomo ovunque vole, e di muovere lo al suo arbitrio all'ira, al diletto, allo sdegno, e all'amore.'

¹⁹ On Urbanus' efforts at *renovatio* see Fumaroli M., *L'Age de l'éloquence* (Genève: 2002 [1980]) 204–11.

The same might be argued for Hawksmoor's attempts to bring back to life the architecture of the primitive Christians. Pierre du Prey and Vaughan Hart have shown how Hawksmoor used what knowledge was then available about early Christian architecture through the travel accounts of Wheeler and others to develop ground plans and interiors that would resemble the churches of these early believers; they have also shown how Hawksmoor combined elements of historical architecture. The spire of St George Bloomsbury for instance incorporates elements taken from the mausoleum at Halicarnassus and the temple of Bacchus at Baalbec that are crowned by a sacrificial altar topped by a statue of George I (Fig. 11). But we might go even further, and argue that two of the most striking aspects of Hawksmoor's churches, their radical subversion or lack of traditional formal elements, and their very conspicuous use of Roman religious vessels, such as the sacrificial altars on the roof of St Alphege (Fig. 5), may in fact be interpreted in terms of Allacci's view of the sublime as a return to primitive, sublime speech in their refusal of the historical tradition of church architecture and their subversion of the rules of classical architecture to create stone figurations devoid of iconographical content that border on the abstract. The door frames at St George's Bloomsbury completely overturn the traditional structural role of the keystone (Fig. 3). The huge, abstracted version of rustication covering the entrance wall of St Mary Woolnoth, might almost be called a thematization, and in that sense figuration, of the idea of a wall with an entrance (Fig. 2). St Alphege in Greenwich combines a very stark Doric façade with very conspicuous sacrificial vessels on its roof, thus fusing the idea of primitivism with that of sacrifice (Fig. 5). When seen from a distance the façade of Christ Church Spitalfields appears flat; only when one approaches it and mounts the steps does one realize the depth of the portico (Fig. 6); similarly, the ressauts in the interior appear not to protrude significantly, but when one starts to enter the nave, they step forward and change the impression the space creates completely, from a rectangular to a square (Fig. 4). Here an element of Roman architecture used originally to carry a statue (as in a triumphal arch) is used to shape and transform the way the viewer experiences architectural space.

All these details have in common that they break away from traditional use: they are used to create a 17th-century view of primitive Christian architecture, and do away with iconographical content, but all act very strongly on the viewer, whose normal expectations are subverted or deceived to create an experience of the "solemn and awfull" character of the religion celebrated in these churches.



Fig. 11. Nicholas Hawksmoor, St George Bloomsbury, consecrated 1731, view of the spire (photograph: Wikipedia Commons).

Conclusion

The sublime functioned in various ways in Anglican architecture of the decades around 1700. It provided the aesthetic vocabulary of the dark, intricate, solemn and awful that is the very opposite of the Renaissance aesthetics of Alberti or Palladio. The version of the sublime developed in the *ambiente* of the Barberini by Allacci forged a link between sublime eloquence, both spoken and silent, and divine, original language, which combined with the antiquarian investigations of the same circle contributed to a vision of architectural history in which the primitive is favoured over the Renaissance version of architecture *all'antica*. These ideas may very well have reached Hawksmoor through his learned Anglican patrons, who by means of intermediaries such as Emanuel Schelstrate were aware of Christian Barberini archaeology of the 1630s.

At the same time, a series of editions and translations of Longinus was published on English soil from the 1630s, and initially, as in the case of John Hall, sprang from a desire to revive religious oratory and the powers of free, republican speech. These systems of metaphors were developed in religious and above all political contexts to represent the unrepresentable: killing the king, abolishing the religion of Rome, or founding a new republic from the very foundations.

The sublime thus provided a series of metaphors, one might almost say a poetics, to represent the divine by architectural means. In Anglican architecture around 1700, this could no longer be represented, suggested or conveyed by means of statues or sculptures or even inscriptions. The façades of the churches by Hawksmoor or Wren are empty, abstract, classical aniconic compositions; the interiors are devoid of crucifixes, statues or paintings. Confronted with the task to convey some sense of the divine presence, or sacred character of churches, architects turned to the aesthetics, or rather system of metaphors provided by the sublime from the 1630s onwards. Because these metaphors of the sublime became so frequent, and all shared some architectonic feature, just as architecture is an important source of metaphor in Longinus, they provided after the Restoration a means, a poetics of representing the divine in an abstract way, by highlighting architecture's vastness, precarious composition, and its capacity to direct, unsettle or transform the visitor's experience. Even today, the visitor to Saint Paul's is told that the best way to grasp the infinity of God is to look at the vast spaces Wren created.

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PARADOXICAL ENCOUNTERS.
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ARCHITECTURAL EXPERIENCES
AND THE SUBLIME

Sigrid de Jong

At first sight, in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of the Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Edmund Burke (1729–1797) hardly evokes the relation of the sublime to architecture. He focuses mainly on nature, literature and, to a lesser degree, painting, and uses experiences in art, nature and words to define the sublime. Only once he refers to an actual building, or rather a ruin:

When any work seems to have required immense force and labour to effect it, the idea is grand. Stonehenge, neither for disposition nor ornament, has any thing admirable; but those huge rude masses of stone, set on end, and piled each on other, turn the mind on immense force necessary for such a work. Nay the rudeness of the work increases this cause of grandeur, as it excludes the idea of art, and contrivance; for dexterity produces another sort of effect which is different enough from this.¹

However, upon closer examination of his text we do find descriptions of how architecture can reach sublimity. Despite this, scholars have rarely read the *Enquiry* from the point of view of architecture. And as for the earlier theories on the sublime, especially by Longinus and Nicolas Boileau, they are mainly overlooked as well as far as architecture is concerned.² Yet, in eighteenth-century architectural thought both Burke's ideas on the sublime and Longinus' and Boileau's writings on the subject played a significant role. Thus, while Burke's work had a remarkable impact right from its appearance in 1757, the older theories on the sublime still continued their influence as well. There is a specific case in the eighteenth

¹ Burke E., *Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) (London/New York: 2008), 77.

² The influence of the sublime on (revolutionary) architecture has been discussed in for example Kaufmann E., *Three revolutionary architects: Boullée, Ledoux and Lequeu* (Philadelphia: 1952), and Saint-Girons B., *Fiat Lux: Une philosophie du sublime* (Paris: 1993), but the influence of the sublime on the experience of architecture has found little attention. Laroque D. "Boullée et le Sublime", in Matelli, E., *Il Sublime, Fortuna di un testo e di un'idea* (Milan: 2007), 263–272 discusses mainly Boullée.

century that can shed a clearer light on this persistence of the different sublime theories in architectural thought. As the sublime in architecture is particularly to be found in the experience of buildings, we will look into the eighteenth-century encounters with the ruins of the Greek Doric temples at South-Italian Paestum. Following their rediscovery in about 1740, a first folio monograph was published in 1764, and until 1799 an impressive amount of seven of these monographic illustrated folio volumes on Paestum would follow, among which one by Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778) [Fig. 1].³ It is, however, in the many personal written accounts that we can find most of the complex and contradictory reactions to the site. The temples caused such a stir in architectural thought, that these offer a broad scope of reactions to an archaeological site, and to ancient architecture. Above all, although these writings are not easy to interpret, they do have one element in common: they often use the sublime to describe an experience, and furthermore, the sublime in all its facets.

To eighteenth-century visitors the temples did not resemble any architecture they were familiar with. Accepted thoughts on classical architecture were thus turned upside down. The confrontations with an unfamiliar architecture at a distant, deserted and dangerous site made that the encounters of travellers with the ruins of Paestum often convey their paradoxical feelings. We could say that the strange sublimity of the temples is forcefully expressed in a watercolour by John Robert Cozens (1752–1797), who visited Paestum in 1782. [Fig. 2] But to show the wide range of sublime reactions we have to turn to the written Paestum accounts. For, even when they do not explicitly use the term, many travellers clearly draw on the concept. Above all, in the large amount of reactions available that tell us their observations when first setting eyes on the temples, we can distinguish different varieties of the sublime. We will treat them thematically, from the more basic feelings of astonishment and *je ne sais quoi*, to the more complex sensations of grandeur and paradox and reflections on character and the male aspect. Thus, we will

³ Dumont Gabriel-Pierre-Martin, *Suite de Plans, Coupes, Profils [...] de Paesto* (Paris, Dumont: 1764); Morghen Filippo, *Sei Vedute delle Rovine di Pesto* (Naples, s.n.: 1765); [Longfield John] *The Ruins of Paestum or Posidonia* (London, s.n.: 1767); Major Thomas, *The Ruins of Paestum* (London, s.n.: 1768) / *Les Ruines de Paestum* (Paris, T. Major: 1768); Dumont Gabriel-Pierre-Martin [text of Longfield translated], *Les Ruines de Paestum autrement Posidonia* (London/Paris, C.-A. Jombert: 1769); Piranesi Giovanni Battista, *Différentes vues de Pesto* (Rome, s.n.: 1778); Paoli Paolo Antonio, *Paesti, quod Posidoniam etiam dixere rudera* (Rome, s.n.: 1784); Delagardette Claude-Mathieu, *Les Ruines de Paestum ou Posidonia* (Paris, l'auteur/H. Barbou: 1799).



Fig. 1. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, The three temples of Paestum seen from the south (from left to right: the Temple of Athena, the Temple of Neptune and the Basilica) (1778). Engraving in Piranesi's *Différentes vues de quelques restes de trois grands édifices qui subsistent encore dans le milieu de l'ancienne ville de Pesto autrement Possidonia qui est située dans la Lucanie* (Rome: 1778), plate III.



Fig. 2. John Robert Cozens, 'The Two Great Temples at Paestum' (Temple of Neptune and Basilica) (c. 1782). Watercolour on paper, 24.5 × 36.8 cm. Image © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

examine the actual experience *in situ*, at Paestum, to see how this concept in architectural experience emerges as a kaleidoscope of paradoxical spatial observations. Moreover, these experiences will offer us at the same time a new way of looking at the sublime in architecture.

Astonishment and je ne sais quoi

Throughout the eighteenth century, Paestum continued to be associated in the accounts with mystery, vastness, the curiosity of rediscovery, and the adventure of travelling. The aesthetic theories by Burke, and those in the different editions of Longinus gave travellers a mode of expressing these experiences in a specific way. Thus, in their diversity the reactions to Paestum utilize in the conflicting and contradictory expressions the concept of the sublime, in its many different definitions. While Longinus wrote a rhetorical theory of how to move the audience by using a grand and elevated style, Boileau's writings tended more towards the experiential character of the sublime. Boileau also stressed simplicity, and made the focus on ambivalence stronger. With Burke the sublime became, instead of part of rhetorical theory, an aesthetic theory. He defined more clearly how architecture can be sublime, by identifying the characteristics of buildings that lead to an experience of the sublime, but also stressed that the sublime takes shape in the mind of the spectator. A first element of the sublime that echoes in the Paestum experiences is astonishment. It appeared already in Longinus and Boileau and is explained by Burke in his *Enquiry* as 'the effect of the sublime in the highest degree'. The 'inferior effects' of the sublime are admiration, reverence and respect; only astonishment 'hurries us on by an irresistible force'.⁴ Some degree of horror is needed to feel completely astonished, in a way that the mind of the spectator is entirely occupied by this passion or emotion.⁵ In combining the sublime with feelings of fear and terror, Burke argued that: 'do not the french *étonnement*, and the english *astonishment* and *amazement*, point out as clearly the kindred emotions which attend fear and wonder?'⁶

⁴ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 57: 'astonishment is the state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it.'

⁵ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 57.

⁶ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 58.

Stressing the difference between the beautiful and the sublime, he adds an important aspect: that of modification, when he repeats the basis for the great is terror, 'which, when it is modified causes that emotion in the mind, which I have called astonishment; the beautiful is founded on mere positive pleasure, and excites in the soul that feeling, which is called love.'⁷ In the accounts on Paestum we can both find the Longinian astonishment of being in awe, and the Burkean astonishment combined with horror.

A travel account, written in 1785, illustrates these different levels of a sublime experience in Paestum. The French magistrate and politician Charles Dupaty (1746–1788) writes about: 'un si horrible désert'.⁸ He asks himself how the Greek builders could have constructed such massive and rough buildings, which reminds one of Burke's passage on Stonehenge: 'Comment donc des Sybarites ont-ils imaginé et mis debout des colonnes d'un nombre si prodigieux, d'une matière si vile, d'un travail si brut, d'une masse si lourde et d'une forme si monotone?'⁹ It also emphasizes that the temples being ancient and man-made caused sublime reflections. The experience is further enhanced by characteristics of the site that have little to do with architecture, but all the more with the circumstances of being at the spot. These sensations work together in constructing the overall impression that Paestum left in the mind of the beholder: a paradoxical but fascinating sentiment.

Quel dommage qu'il faille si-tôt quitter ces lieux [...] Mais la chaleur est extrême; il n'y a d'abri nulle part. Je voudrais pourtant bien recueillir et remporter dans mon cœur toutes les sensations que je viens d'éprouver. – Qu'on me laisse puiser encore, dans cette solitude, dans ce désert, dans ces ruines, je ne sais quelle horreur, qui me charme.¹⁰

The solitude Dupaty feels in the vastness of the plain in which the temples are situated, the impressiveness of the deserted ruins, make him turn to the sublime. In 'je ne sais quelle horreur', Dupaty connects the sublime

⁷ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 157–158.

⁸ Dupaty Charles-Marguerite-Jean-Baptiste-Mercier, *Lettres sur l'Italie en 1785* (Paris, De Senne: 1788), vol. 2, 195. On Dupaty see: Prouteau J.L., *Charles Dupaty: un magistrat-philosophe du Siècle des Lumières* (La Rochelle: 1989); *Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth century*, vol. 230 (Oxford/Paris: 1985).

⁹ Dupaty, *Lettres sur l'Italie*, vol. 2, 196.

¹⁰ British edition of 1788: "Letter XCVI written on the pediment of a temple at Poestum", Dupaty Charles-Marguerite-Jean-Baptiste-Mercier, *Sentimental Letters on Italy; written in French by president Dupaty, in 1785. published at Rome in 1788, and translated the same year by J. Povoleri, at Paris.*, vol. II (London, J. Bew: 1789), 139–143. Dupaty, *Lettres sur l'Italie*, vol. 2, 199.

with the concept of 'je ne sais quoi'. The expression 'je ne sais quoi' was introduced in Dominique Bouhours' *Les entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* (1671): le génie [...] est indépendant du hasard et de la fortune, c'est un don du ciel, où la terre n'a point de part; c'est je ne sais quoi de divin.¹¹ In his text Bouhours connected it already with the sublime style, to express the inexpressible. René Rapin did the same in his *Les comparaisons des grands hommes de l'antiquité qui ont le plus excellé dans les belles-lettres* (1684), in the course of comparing Homer and Vergil, he stated that Homer 'a un plan bien plus vaste et de plus nobles manières que Virgile, qu'il a une plus grande étendue de caractère, qu'il a un air plus grand et je ne sais quoi de sublime, qu'il peint beaucoup mieux les choses; que ses images mêmes sont plus achevées.'¹² Boileau was the first in his *Traité* to divide the sublime and the sublime style in explaining Longinus: 'Il faut donc savoir que, par Sublime, Longin n'entend pas ce que les orateurs appellent le style sublime: mais cet extraordinaire et ce merveilleux qui frappe dans le discours, et qui fait qu'un ouvrage enlève, ravit, transporte. Le style sublime veut toujours de grands mots.'¹³ And he emphasized that the sublime was not explainable, but was in fact something that could only be felt. Because the architecture of Paestum was difficult to understand and did not relate to classical architecture travellers were familiar with, they referred to the unexplainable. Burke mentioned the unexplainable in another connotation, when talking about gracefulness, which he compares to beauty, and defines as roundness, and delicacy of attitude and emotion, 'it is that all the magic of grace consists, and what is called its *je ne sais quoi*'.¹⁴

Perceiving something beyond one's grasp also found its expression in the account of the British architect Charles Heathcote Tatham (1772–1842), who went to Paestum in 1795.¹⁵ Tatham's account is a passionate text expressing his feelings.¹⁶ For Tatham the sublime provided the perfect

¹¹ Quoted in Litman T.A., *Le sublime en France (1660–1714)* (Paris: 1971), note 115, 24.

¹² Quoted in Litman T.A., *Le sublime en France (1660–1714)* (Paris: 1971), note 115, 32.

¹³ Boileau in his preface, in Goyet F., *Longin, Traité du Sublime, traduction de Boileau* (Paris: 1995), 70.

¹⁴ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 119, in section xxii of the third part on beauty.

¹⁵ The Sir John Soane's Museum in London holds a measured drawing of the Neptune temple by Tatham, in Charles Heathcote Tatham, *Italian drawings*, Vol. 109.

¹⁶ Pearce S – Salmon F., "Charles Heathcote Tatham in Italy, 1794–96: Letters, Drawings and Fragments, and Part of an Autobiography", *The Walpole Society* 2004/2005 (Cambridge MA: 2005), 1–92 (86: Paestum). 'After a residence of three weeks during which I once only went to the Theatre of San Carlo the finest in the world, I engaged a Vetturino for Paestum with the Master of the Hotel for my Compagnon de Voyage who turned out an excellent

framework to put his sensations into words. His account shows a similarity to Longinus' ideas, first in making use of the contrast between darkness and light in describing how the light struck the temples from above upon their arrival: 'We were overtaken by a storm. It was in the month of January. We weathered it with difficulty the horizon however cleared as if on purpose to salute my eye with the most perfect coup d'oeul of sublime effect.' Further he writes how his sudden astonishment of the sight of Paestum's scenery lifted him from his carriage: 'We found ourselves within a short distance of the Temples, about which buffaloes were feeding, with a fine background of blue sky, the blue sea on the left and the Appenines on the right. I arose from my seat & exclaimed Dio mio!'. The next step, in moving towards the temples made him reflect on how the Greeks were able to produce the sublime, by using vastness and infinity that transport the spectator. When he reaches the temples, Tatham writes:

After alighting & approaching the Temples, my mind became so much expanded from the contemplation of Columns of such grand dimensions that I received an impression I have never forgotten. The Greeks were a wonderful people. They knew too well how simplicity with vastness & continuousness produced sublimity. How calculated are the Fine Arts to elevate the soul when reflected through a pure medium!¹⁷

The elevation of the mind and the soul, the vastness which produces the sublime, and the whole journey that worked like an overture to produce these feelings, call to mind the ideas expressed in *Peri Hupsous*. These elements in Dupaty's and Tatham's writings tell us about the most basic sensations of the sublime, of astonishment, inexpressibility and elevation, that were produced in viewing the site. Apart from that the sublime consisted also of feelings of grandeur that transport the viewer, but of more complex feelings as well, paradoxical experiences that can be defined by applying the sublime. These we will encounter in the next section.

English hearted fellow. We passed the first night in awretched Inn & laid down in our cloathes & pistols by our sides. There was a uncouth set of people within the wells who did not inspire me with much confidence. We remained safely, & slept ay intervals amidst noise & confusion, & started early in the morning in quest of the Temples.' Other studies on Tatham include: Udy D., "The Neo-Classicism of Charles Heathcote Tatham", *The Connoisseur* 177, 714 (1971) 269–276; Salmon F. "Charles Heathcote Tatham and the Accademia di S. Luca, Rome", *Burlington Magazine* 140, 1139 (1998) 85–92.

¹⁷ Pearce – Salmon, "Charles Heathcote Tatham", 86.

From the grandeur to the paradox in the sublime

Just as in Longinus' and Boileau's writings, the word *grandeur* is often used by Burke, partly as a synonym for the sublime, but also as part of the definition of the sublime. In the sections in which he writes on architecture, the term *grandeur* appears in several phrases, in relation to magnificence for instance, which he considers a source of the sublime, and to light, and to colour as productive of the sublime. Burke also uses it when he discusses smell and taste. In the descriptions of Paestum the term 'grandeur' is regularly used as well. British travel-writer Henry Swinburne (1743–1803) applied it in relation to the temple of Neptune, defining it as an important characteristic that would produce the sublime:

This is one of the noblest monuments of antiquity we have left; though built in a style few modern architects will adopt, it may perhaps serve to inspire them with sublime ideas, and convince them how necessary to true grandeur in architecture are simplicity of plan, solidity in proportions, and greatness of the component members; they may perhaps discover that a profusion of ornaments rather diminishes the general effect of a large building than adds to its real dignity.¹⁸

The simplicity of the temples, having no ornament but merely consisting of the main architectural parts, and their sheer size contributed to their grandness. The grand simplicity of the temples was also to the British sculptor and illustrator John Flaxman (1755–1826) in 1788, a feature that created the sublime: 'I have been at Pæstum and seen the three fine temples of the ancient Doric order in that city; they are in better preservation than any ancient temple in Rome, except the Pantheon. The idea of each of these buildings is so simple, the larger parts so truly great, the small members done with so much feeling and delicacy that my mind was filled with the sublime of architecture.'¹⁹ The little drawing Flaxman made of the temples in his letter [Fig. 3] may demonstrate their simplicity, but not the grand impression the buildings made on him. This does become manifest in his words written down in another letter, on the elevated feelings that were produced by the effect the buildings had on its beholder, and where the uniqueness of Paestum is emphasized:

¹⁸ Swinburne Henry, *Travels in the Two Sicilies, In the years 1777, 1778, 1779 and 1780*, 2 vol., (London, s.n.: 1783–1785), vol. II, 136–137 (on Paestum Section XVIII, 131–139: "Journey to Paestum").

¹⁹ Flaxman J., "Letter to George Romney, Rome, 25 May 1788" in Romney J., *Memoirs of the life and the works of George Romney* (London: 1830), 204–207.



Fig. 3. John Flaxman, Sketch of the temples at Paestum (1788). Sketch in pen, illustrating a letter to George Romney, Rome, 25 May 1788 in John Romney, *Memoirs of the Life and Works of George Romney* (London: 1830), 205.

The Temples are of the earliest Doric order the Columns thick fluted & without bases the simple greatness of their effect [...] elevated & delighted my mind more than all the other Architecture I have seen in Italy, which have been raised under the auspices of Roman taste & perfected in the elegance of Imperial corruption.²⁰

As we see here, even if visitors do not always literally use the term sublime, they do make use of the concept in stating their astonishment, elevation or evoking the grandeur of the buildings or calling them 'lofty temples' as Patrick Brydone did in 1771, echoing William Smith's translation of Longinus, who used the words lofty and grand as synonyms for the sublime.²¹

These ideas make a specific use of the sublime in another Paestum account more lucid. It is a particular case of the sublime used in relation to Paestum in the travel diary of the French architect Pierre-Louis Moreau (1727–1794). In the descriptions of his expedition to Paestum in 1757, the recurrent use of the word grandeur is noteworthy.²² In two pages, Moreau applies the expression grandeur four times to the site. He describes 'la plaine d'un grandeur fort considerable', and: 'La grandeur

²⁰ Flaxman J., "Letter to William Hayley, Rome July 17th 1788", British Library, London, MS Add 39780 f. 44 recto.

²¹ Brydone presents Paestum, falsely, as not having been visible before its discovery: 'the discovery of Pestum, a Grecian city, that had not been heard of for many ages; till of late some of its lofty temples were seen, peeping over the tops of the woods; upbraiding mankind for their shameful neglect; and calling upon them to bring it once more to light. According curiosity, and the hopes of gain, a still more powerfull motive, soon opened a passage, and exposed to view these valuable and respectable relics.' Brydone Patrick, *A tour through Sicily and Malta in a series of letters to William Beckford*, 2 vols., London, W. Strahan & T. Cadell: 1775, vol. 1, 46–47. Smith William, *Dionysius Longinus On the Sublime* (London, J. Watts/ W. Innys & R. Manby: 1739).

²² On Moreau: Descat S. (ed.), *Le Voyage d'Italie de Pierre-Louis Moreau: Journal intime d'un architecte des Lumières (1754–1757)* (Bordeaux: 2004); Descat S., *Deux architectes-urbanistes dans l'Europe des Lumières: Pierre-Louis Moreau et George Dance à Paris et à Londres (1763–1815)*, unpublished PhD thesis (Paris, Sorbonne: 2000).

de cette malheureuse ville était considerable.²³ Moreau also writes that 'l'ordre dorique est employé à tous les trois [temples] dans toute la sévérité et la grandeur de style qu'eux seuls ont pratiquées.'²⁴

The architect gives with his 'journal intime' an interesting insight in the different stages of experiencing Paestum: the dangers and fatigues of travelling, and the first reflections on the temples, when there were not yet any publications available. It also makes clear how in a sublime experience the architecture is only one part; while the buildings in Paestum are perceived as sublime, there are many other elements that create or contribute to this experience, for example the dangers of travelling to the site, mentioned by Moreau. It is remarkable as well that in his use of the word *grandeur*, and in the rest of his description, the architect often brings up paradoxical sensations. At the site, Moreau is astonished by the magnificence of the buildings, and by the city, while at the same time he feels pity:

La vue de cette ville nous frappa d'étonnement et de pitié considérant son étendue, la magnificence des bâtiments dont on voit encore des restes et la ruine entière de la plus grande partie des édifices dont elle était ornée et dont la place est labourée ou couverte de monceaux de pierre.²⁵

This mixture of two different emotions is typical for a sublime experience. Precisely the emotions of contentment, contrast and the awareness that there seems to be a contradiction produce the sublime. Moreau's descriptions of a mixture of astonishment and pity, of *grandeur* and sadness, of severity and *grandeur*, of a long difficult voyage and magnificent buildings, and of savages in a desert and a grand plain, illustrate this aspect of sublime experiences.²⁶ His experiences are more intense, profound and overwhelming exactly because of the paradoxical combination of two different emotions.

Burke's treatise had not yet appeared when Moreau wrote about his experiences. But it shows that the same combination of emotions, which did not yet have the theoretical basis that Burke would give them, were previously used in descriptions of the experience of architecture and

²³ Moreau P.-L., "Journal de Voyage", Collection Jacques Doucet, Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris, Ms 98, f. 46 recto; see also Descat (ed.), *Le Voyage d'Italie*, 126.

²⁴ Moreau, "Journal de Voyage", 46 verso.

²⁵ Moreau, "Journal de Voyage", 46 recto.

²⁶ 'Les seuls habitants qu'on y voit sont des pasteurs et quelques gens vêtus de peaux d'animaux qui ressemblent à des sauvages comme le lieu ressemble à un désert.' Moreau, "Journal de Voyage", 46 recto.

travelling. It also demonstrates that, when we compare these to other accounts of ancient sites, Paestum is an extraordinary case: it has precisely this combination of paradoxical elements. The dangers of travelling, the savage surroundings, the strangeness of the architecture, the vastness of its landscape, and the size of the temples: these elements all contribute to the mixed emotional experience. More than any other ancient site Paestum was a source of such ambivalent feelings. And the concept of the sublime lent itself particularly well to give expression to them.

Now we have seen how astonishment, inexpressiveness and paradoxical sensations caused the sublime in Paestum, we will turn to some architects who associated the architecture of Paestum with a certain character. The sublime elements we encountered in the past two sections did not have much to do with classicism, nor did visitors draw on their knowledge of architectural theory or history. The experiences were in fact a-historical and only the sudden sensations that are evoked at the spot counted, feelings that did not make use of knowledge but were intense impressions that overwhelmed the visitors, regardless of them being an architect, a writer or a sculptor. We will focus in the next section on three architects and a writer to see how they experienced Paestum, with ideas about the character of architecture in mind.

Character and the male aspect

The French architect Antoine-Laurent-Thomas Vaudoyer (1756–1846) had built in his mind an image of Paestum, even before visiting the site. It was in Rome, in 1785, that he used the Paestum order in a design for a clock in the form of a tomb, previous to having seen the temples with his own eyes.²⁷ In a long letter he explained why he chose this order that had a paradoxical expression: ‘Le caractère et les proportions de cet ordre portent la tristesse, mais en même temps la fermeté, allusion à celle qu’on

²⁷ Studies on Vaudoyer include the seminal one by Bergdoll B., *Leon Vaudoyer. Historicism in the Age of Industry* (New York: 1994); Bergdoll B. (et al.), *Les Vaudoyer: une dynastie d'architectes* (Paris: 1991); *Dessins d'architectes XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles; Antoine, Léon et Alfred Vaudoyer, Vente à Paris, Hôtel Drouot, 11 avril 1986* (Paris: 1986); Daly C. “Notices nécrologiques (MM. Vaudoyer et Baltard)”, *Revue de l'Architecture et des Travaux Publics* 6 (1845–1846), 547–552; 550: ‘M. Vaudoyer avait une belle bibliothèque d'architecture où se rencontraient des hommes illustres de tous les temps et de pays très divers; il en prêtait les volumes précieux à ses élèves avec une généreuse bienveillance.’

doit avoir dans les malheurs.’²⁸ In his description we can trace the influence of the theories expressed by Jacques-François Blondel (1705–1774) on ‘caractère’ in his *Cours d’Architecture* (1771–1777).²⁹

Thus, when Vaudoyer visited the site in 1787, his image of Paestum was already specific. This image was based on five years of education at the Académie d’Architecture in Paris, under the guidance of Julien-David Le Roy (1724–1803) and working in the architectural office of Antoine-François Peyre (1739–1823). It was also based on reading books and journals, on studying drawings and engravings, and on debating with other architects. The picture of Paestum was further developed when Vaudoyer stayed at the Académie de France in Rome as a winner of the Prix de Rome. Not only did he encounter other architects there, who had already visited the temples, but he had also the opportunity to prepare his visit further. He bought the latest study on the temples of Paestum, by Paolo Paoli, published in Rome in 1784. It was the seventh monograph to appear on Paestum in the eighteenth century. In the margins of the book Vaudoyer wrote his comments. Under one of these handwritten comments he signed: ‘Rome June 1786, Vaudoyer architect’.³⁰ In these marginalia he emphasized that Paoli had never seen Paestum with his own eyes. Since Vaudoyer himself had not yet visited the temples, but nevertheless allowed himself to think Paoli wrong, the French architect must have discussed the subject with other architects who stayed at the Académie de France, or with foreign architects and travellers who were in Rome at the time, and who had observed the architecture of Paestum themselves.³¹

Thus, with an apparently rich image in his mind, Vaudoyer went to visit Paestum in the summer of 1787. But despite the mental picture he had created of it through drawings, engravings, texts and conversations, his great expectations were not fulfilled. When first confronted with the temples, Vaudoyer found them to be more coarse and rough than the anticipation based on his prior knowledge had led him to expect: ‘Toute cette architec-

²⁸ Vaudoyer A.L.T., Letter to Lebas, Rome 10 August 1785, letter no. 49, Private collection, Paris. See Bergdoll, who quoted the letter in *Leon Vaudoyer*, 32, but with an incorrect date.

²⁹ See on caractère: Szambien W., *Symétrie Goût Caractère. Théorie et terminologie de l’architecture à l’âge classique 1550–1800* (Paris: 1986).

³⁰ ‘a Roma gunio 1786 Vaudoyer architetto’ in: Paoli, *Paesti, quod Posidoniam etiam dixerunt rudera*, in the library collection of the Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art, Paris.

³¹ Louis Combes was in 1785 in Rome (1782–1786), Bernard as well (1783–1787), L.A. Trouard in 1783 (1781–1785). British architects who were in Rome at the time: Willey Reveley (1784–1788), Thomas Johnson (1785–1786), John Thomas Groves (1786), Thomas O’Brien (1786–98), see Salmon F., *Building on Ruins: The Rediscovery of Rome and English Architecture* (Aldershot: 2000), 231.

ture est, en général, d'un caractère très lourd et très pesant; les colonnes sont courtes, très serrées, de gros chapiteaux, pas de base; le pied pose sur trois gros gradins; l'Entablement est très fort et très saillant'.³² The discrepancy between expectation and experience would later be quite accurately formulated by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), who visited Paestum a few months earlier, on 23 March 1787:

Denn im architektonischen Aufriß erscheinen sie [the temples] eleganter, in perspektivischer Darstellung plumper, als sie sind, nur wenn man sich um sie her, durch sie durch bewegt, teilt man ihnen das eigentliche Leben mit; man fühlt es wieder aus ihnen heraus, welches der Baumeister beabsichtigte, ja hineinschuf.³³

When Vaudoyer wrote further about the largest temple, he made a pre-conditioned comparison: 'cet effet; son aspect Mâle et imposant m'a fait beaucoup de plaisir et j'y ai trouvé, si l'on peut dire, ainsi, la forme, les grâces et finesses de l'hercule'.³⁴ This could have been a direct influence of Vitruvius' writings, in which it was argued that 'The temples of Minerva, Mars, and Hercules will be Doric, since it is appropriate for temples to these gods to be built without dainty decoration on account of their virile strength'.³⁵ The comparison with the sculpture of the Roman hero Hercules, instead of referring to Greek culture, may also have been connected to the transport of the impressive manly and muscular sculpture of the much talked of so-called Farnese Hercules to the Capodimonte palace in Naples in 1787, where Vaudoyer may have seen it. Furthermore, he was not certain about the function of the buildings at Paestum, two of them are temples, but 'à droite, très près du Grand Temple, on trouve une Colonnade de grande face, qui ressemble assez à un portique ou promenoir'.³⁶

In short, we can say that Vaudoyer, although prepared for what he would see in Paestum, was not really able to analyse and comprehend the architecture. He took the necessary measurements of the temples and made some drawings of them, but from these we cannot extract an understanding of Paestum, nor does his simple drawing of the Neptune temple [Fig. 4] express his feelings at the spot. It also tells us that when

³² Vaudoyer A.L.T., travel diary entitled "Voyage de Rome à Poestum et tout le Royaume de Naples" (1787), Private collection, Paris, f. 123.

³³ Goethe J.W. von, *Italienische Reise*, [1786–1788] 1829 (München: 1988), 206.

³⁴ Vaudoyer, "Voyage de Rome à Poestum et tout le Royaume de Naples", f. 123.

³⁵ Vitruvius, *De Architectura Libri Decem*, book 1, chapter 2: 5, in: Smith T.G., *Vitruvius on Architecture* (New York: 2003), 68.

³⁶ Vaudoyer, "Voyage de Rome à Poestum et tout le Royaume de Naples", f. 123.



Fig. 4. Antoine-Laurent-Thomas Vaudoyer, 'Grand Temple de Pœstum' (The Temple of Neptune with Basilica in background) (1787). Pencil on paper. Private collection, Paris.

we only look at his images we cannot comprehend what Vaudoyer experienced. However, it is only by actual observation that he comes close to the particular characteristics of Paestum, closer than he was before he saw the temples with his own eyes and when he based his knowledge on publications and buildings. The Temple of Neptune impressed him by being large and virile, but *'l'architecture du petit temple ne le vaut pas et encore moins celle du portique.'*³⁷

Vaudoyer's remarks about virility, the male and grand temples, the mystery about the former function of the ruins, the adventure of traveling, the scenery of the temples, all relate to the Burkean sublime. Also in the experience of his contemporary Goethe we find aspects of the sublime, when he argued that he had become so conditioned to a more slender style of architecture that the crowded masses of stumpy conical columns appeared 'offensive and even terrifying'.³⁸ Goethe's reaction to

³⁷ Vaudoyer, "Voyage de Rome à Poestum et tout le Royaume de Naples", f. 123.

³⁸ 'Nun sind unsere Augen und durch sie unser ganzes inneres Wesen an schlankere Baukunst hinangetrieben und entschieden bestimmt, so daß uns diese stumpfen, kegel-

the temples demonstrates not only the discrepancy between a previous knowledge and an observation at the spot, but also the ambivalent fascination their offensive and terrifying columns exercise, again illustrating the mixture of emotions that is particular to the sublime.

It was mainly the whole scenery of the temples and the excitement of undertaking the journey to the site that had an impact on Vaudoyer. His knowledge, so carefully constructed in the previous years, did not help him to comprehend the site, since at the spot this was not relevant anymore. The invigorating adventure, the enchanting landscape, and the peculiar architecture are clearly distinguishable in Vaudoyer's text. All three are connected with the actual perception *in situ*. The experience of being there and perceiving the temples with his own eyes was an important condition for appreciation, but it did not necessarily lead to immediate understanding. However, when we look at his perceptions in the light of the aesthetic concept of the sublime, formulated in Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry*, the experiences of Vaudoyer become clearer. The sublime defined as allusions of power, elevation and austerity was associated in the eighteenth century with masculinity. Considered in these terms Paestum represents the sublime to Vaudoyer, who discovered that the classical ideals of beauty were not to be found in Paestum. But these were not important in the sublime. In the sublime, architecture was not to be viewed in one single glance as in the classical theories, on the contrary. The vastness and infinity, so present in the theories of Burke, were visible in reality in the vastness and spatiality of Paestum. Knowledge from books or engravings was not of use in this perception. The sublime enabled Vaudoyer to leave all that aside, because in his impressions these were not of importance.

When the British architect Willey Reveley (1760–1799) wrote in the introduction to the third volume of James Stuart and Nicolas Revett's *The Antiquities of Athens* (1794) about his observations of the Greek Doric in general, he also pointed to the masculinity of Paestum:

The Grecian Doric is by many indiscriminately censured for clumsiness. But those who are so ready to condemn it should first recollect, that it was applied only where the greatest dignity and strength were required. [...] To omit the bases of slender Dorics, as is done in the theatre of Marcellus at Rome, seems to be as erroneous a practice as to add them to the massy ones. Let those who prefer the later Doric indiscriminately, and entirely reject the

förmigen, enggedrängten Säulenmassen lästig, ja furchtbar erscheinen.' Goethe, *Italienische Reise*, 205.

Grecian, try whether they can, with their slender order, produce the chaste and solid grandeur of the Parthenon, or the still more masculine character of the great temple of Pesto. They will no doubt produce, with their smaller proportions, pleasing affects, but a character lighter and less impressive than in the structure above-mentioned.³⁹

In 1785 Reveley had thoroughly examined the site at Paestum, and his travel diary contains many significant observations. It shows how the dangers of travelling to the site added to a sublime experience.⁴⁰ Reveley emphasizes the strength, durability, massiveness and solidity of the Greek monuments, where Burke had Stonehenge as an example. As one of the few architects in this period, Reveley also travelled to Greece. We find the same elements we saw above in the Paestum accounts in Reveley's text, that of virility for example: 'There is a masculine boldness and dignity in the Grecian Doric, the grandeur of whose effect, as Sir William [Chambers] justly observes of the Roman antiquities, can scarcely be understood by those who have never seen it in execution'.⁴¹

The masculinity of the temples impressed Reveley, and he admired their simple grandeur. It did not terrify him, as it did a French architect, Pierre-Adrien Pâris (1745–1819). The reactions of Pâris, who visited Paestum in 1771, also show the value of being actually present at the site. In his words too we can find elements of a sublime aesthetics when confronted with the temples: 'On voit dans les ruines de Pestum ou Posidonia, trois temples dont un surtout est assés bien conservé. Je ne connois rien d'aussi

³⁹ Reveley Willey (ed.), *The Antiquities of Athens measured and delineated by James Stuart F.R.S. and F.S.A. and Nicholas Revett Painters and Architects*, Vol. III (London, John Nichols: 1794), xv. On Stuart and *The Antiquities*: Watkin D., *Athenian Stuart: pioneer of the Greek revival* (London and Boston: 1982); James 'Athenian' Stuart, 1713–1788: *The rediscovery of antiquity* (New Haven/London: 2006).

⁴⁰ 'As strangers rarely go to Pæsto the people when ever any do come impose upon them as much as possible, & will bully & might murder any person if they chose it, for it is out of the way of all justice or enquiry. Therefore all travellers going should be well armed for their own safety & to secure the civility of people whose unhappy situation reduces them to a level with the beasts of the field.' Reveley W., "Volume containing notes and sketches for a proposed Dictionary of Architecture, Travel journal", Royal Institute of British Architects, London, Drawings and Archives Collections, f. 171 verso. 'It is usual from hence to take guards through Appulia, especially through the wood of Bovino where Banditti frequently harbour; however our company consisting of five priests & an old woman a serjeants wife, besides ourselves, proceeded on our journey without any guards, for as the priests would not contribute to the expence Sir Rd [Richard Worsley] determined to run the risk, we had a sword a hanger 2 brace of pistols & two guns with us, which would however have been of no use, as these banditti make their attack by shooting from behind trees.'

⁴¹ Reveley (ed.), *The Antiquities of Athens*, xiii.

terrible, d'aussi imposant, ni d'aussi caractérisé que ces temples'.⁴² Again we come upon the ambivalent combination of feelings proper to the sublime, only achievable by perceiving the object with your own eyes. The use of the word terrible would also be found in the theories of Jacques-François Blondel in his earlier mentioned *Cours d'Architecture*, in which he writes about 'Ce qu'on doit entendre par une Architecture terrible'.⁴³ Pâris was a student of Blondel, and had one of the largest collections of books among Parisian architects, among which a copy of Burke. In Blondel's *Cours d'Architecture* virile architecture was described in an article where he speaks about 'De la différence qu'il y a entre le caractère mâle, ferme ou viril dans l'Architecture'.⁴⁴ In his *Cours* Blondel presents the male aspect as one of the characters a building can possess: a closed grand building, simple and little decorated but creating large shadows by its main building works:

mâle: sans être pesante, conserve dans son ordonnance un caractère de fermeté assorti à la grandeur des lieux & au genre de l'édifice; celle qui est simple dans sa composition générale, sage dans ses formes, & peu chargée de détails dans ses ornements; celle qui s'annonce par des plans rectilignes, par des angles droits, par des corps avancés qui portent de grandes ombres.⁴⁵

In this category there are two different types, the architecture that is 'ferme' and the one that is 'virile'. The first one has less heavy forms, but excites still feelings of astonishment.⁴⁶ The last one is interesting in connection to Paestum, because Blondel links it to the Doric order. It is a very dominant type, because it does not tolerate other decorations that diminish its virility, and Blondel almost describes it as a person.⁴⁷ The aspect of

⁴² Pâris P.A., "Observations", Bibliothèque Institut de France, Paris, ms. 1906, f. 329.

⁴³ Blondel Jacques-François, *Cours d'architecture, ou Traité de la décoration, distribution et construction des bâtiments: contenant les leçons données en 1750 et les années suivantes* (Paris: Desaint 1771–1777), vol. 1, 426–427.

⁴⁴ Blondel, *Cours d'architecture*, vol. 1, 411–413.

⁴⁵ Blondel, *Cours d'architecture*, vol. 1, 411–412. See also Eck C. van, "Par le Style on atteint au Sublime: The Meaning of the Term 'Style' in French Architectural Theory of the late Eighteenth Century", in Eck C. van – McAllister J. – Vall R. van der (eds.), *The Question of Style in Philosophy and the Arts* (Cambridge: 1995), 89–107.

⁴⁶ 'Une Architecture ferme diffère d'une Architecture mâle par les masses: l'Architecture ferme annonce moins de pesanteur, mais néanmoins dans ses parties, dans sa division, elle présente des formes décidées dont les surfaces & les angles sont droits; partout elle montre une certitude, une articulation, qui impose, qui frappe, & qui satisfait les yeux intelligents.' Blondel, *Cours d'architecture*, vol. 1, 412.

⁴⁷ 'mais lorsqu'une fois cet ordre est présent dans la décoration des façades, il faut s'attendre qu'il ne tolère aucun détail, aucun accessoire qui ne soit puisé dans sa virilité: lorsqu'il préside dans l'ordonnance de l'édifice, il ne veut souffrir aucune espèce de

virility was one of those characteristics that was strongly associated with Paestum's temples, and part of the complex feelings that were at play in the experiences at the site.

Mastering a sublime experience

Although Burke gives only one concrete example of architecture, his book offers a much wider range of clues to connect architecture and the sublime than the short discussion of Stonehenge might suggest. And what was only theoretical in Burke's writings, became manifest in the Paestum accounts discussed here. Still, in existing studies architecture and the sublime are connected in a rather limited way. We have seen that, contrary to what these studies on architecture and the sublime tell us, the sublime is not only related to vastness, but is more complex. Paestum illustrated that the physical experience of being at the site is of essence. Rudeness, irregularity, and surprise combined with the spatial experience of infinity and vastness are elements that not necessarily fall within purely aesthetic rules. The experiences that travellers had at the site show this as well. Different elements that constitute the experience work together. Danger, heat, strangeness, discomfort and puzzling thoughts mingle at the site and make the experience complex and hard to define. With an absence of knowledge or the disability to apply existing knowledge to classical architecture, the beholder has to fall back upon his first spontaneous feelings and thoughts. The sublime proved to be an excellent framework to define these sensations.

As the accounts in this article show, the sublime architectural experiences are for the first time clearly and in all its facets present in Paestum. Travellers used the sublime to do justice to their conflicting and paradoxical feelings, to the spatiality of Paestum, and to an experience *in situ*. With it they could express all their contradictory, unpleasant, overwhelming experiences of the ancientness, vastness and roughness of Paestum. Thus it helped to capture in words the paradoxical experiences of architecture. As such, the sublime was used to make sense of the paradox of Paestum.

mêlange, il est même jaloux de communiquer son caractère aux autres ordres qu'on lui associe souvent dans les différents étages du bâtiment.' 'Quoiqu'il paroisse qu'une Architecture virile diffère peu des deux précédentes, il est cependant vrai qu'on peut donner ce nom à celle dans l'ordonnance de laquelle préside l'ordre Dorique. Une Architecture mâle considérée séparément, une Architecture ferme, proprement dite, n'exigent souvent que l'expression rustique ou solide, & non la présence de l'ordre dont nous parlons'. Blondel, *Cours d'architecture*, vol. 1, 412–413.

The paradox became manifest in the strangeness of the architecture, the conflicting sensations and the contrast between expectation and actual experience, or representations of Doric architecture and observations of the site itself.

While Burke was widely published and read during the second half of the eighteenth century and did have a large influence on architectural thought, the Paestum accounts show that in experiencing architecture in the eighteenth century, the theories of Longinus and Boileau still provided an excellent basis for travellers to put into words their contradictory and confusing encounters with an architecture unknown to them. In the theories of the sublime that we have treated, the sublime experience is fuelled by being in awe, in being elevated by art or nature. Evoking the grandeur, the elevation of the mind and the soul, admiration, astonishment, surprise and vastness, all accounts discussed here echo Longinus and Boileau. The sublime as defined by both Longinus as a strategy of persuasion and by Boileau and Burke as an experience are present in the accounts.

A strange and fascinating site, Paestum baffled the visitors. Looking in vain for connections in architectural theory or history, travellers had to depend on their own feelings and experience, on personal and individual observations. The many diverse accounts express contradictory and conflicting sensations, experienced at the spot. They express also the particularity of the site, and the divergence between expectation and experience. Travellers described a discrepancy between the startling immensity of the temples and the unpleasantness of the architecture. The sublime was used both to describe the architecture or the site, and to express an experience. The sublime offered a way to capture in words both the peculiar characteristics of the nature and architecture that were observed, and the actual experience. Thus, the beholder could express the feelings experienced at the spot, and preserve something of the specificity of the site that created these feelings. While travellers commented upon the ugliness of the architecture, the accounts demonstrate as well that the perception of the buildings in Paestum was intensified by the awareness of their unfamiliarity. Because Paestum embodied all these paradoxical aspects it was different from any other monument the travellers had visited.

Thus the confrontation with the oldest Greek temples produced experiences that went against the classical idea of beauty, of harmony, of unity and pureness. The spatial experience prompted viewers to redefine the sublime in architectural thought. As architectural theory or history could not be used to make sense of the paradox of Paestum, but the sublime could, we may conclude that here the sublime has nothing to do with classicism. It is exactly the spatiality, and the a-historical and primitive

character of Paestum that make the visits to the site so destructive to classical laws and ideas of beauty. These classical ideas imply that a building has to be taken in at one glance, something that could not be done at Paestum. Burke broke with this in his theories and introduced for instance the sensation of viewing endless regularity in a building, which is not visible in one single gaze. The sublime was a strong alternative voice that responded to many more aspects than beauty, harmony or regularity alone, and thus became a vehicle for later eighteenth-century clashes with classicism. At Paestum, gloominess, roughness and daunting scale excited sublime feelings. Sublime architecture escaped the rules of classical beauty. Paestum put into question the self-evidence of classicism. That this could take place at a site constructed in antiquity is all the more striking.

Apart from giving expression to its paradoxical characteristics, the sublime is, unlike beauty or the picturesque, apt to do justice to a specifically architectonic experience as in Paestum. It does justice to its spatiality, because in Longinus' and in Burke's theories infinity and vastness are aspects of art that lead to sublime experiences. We saw this in Burke's reaction to Stonehenge. Paestum's spatiality is conspicuous and was expressed in the responses to its vastness, recalling the definitions of such vastness in Burke. It was one of the main reasons why Paestum was considered sublime. In the definitions of the sublime of Longinus and Burke vastness is an important theme, and it is precisely in such vastness that architecture distinguishes itself from the visual arts, because it is such a spatial quality.

The architectural experiences demonstrated that the sublime in architecture is something particular, and differs fundamentally from the sublime in art or in nature. Architecture is different from art in that it is three-dimensional, and different from nature in that it is constructed by man. The latter aspect, highlighted by Burke when he wrote on man having to deal with the difficulty of constructing an immense spatial structure, as in Stonehenge, added to the feeling of the sublime. The awareness that the vastness of Paestum was man-made, ancient and mysterious could produce a sensation of awe. In that sense the sublime functions *par excellence* to put into words the unique character of the Paestum experiences. The accounts also tell us something crucial about architecture and the sublime: spatiality and vastness in particular cannot be experienced on a flat surface representing the temples. One has to be *in situ*. The reactions to Paestum show so forcefully that in and through the very confrontation of the beholder with the temples, in all their vastness and ancientness, that spatial experience is generated.

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